

An Original Wager

By a
VAGABOND



Illustrated by
G MICHELET

AN ORIGINAL WAGER

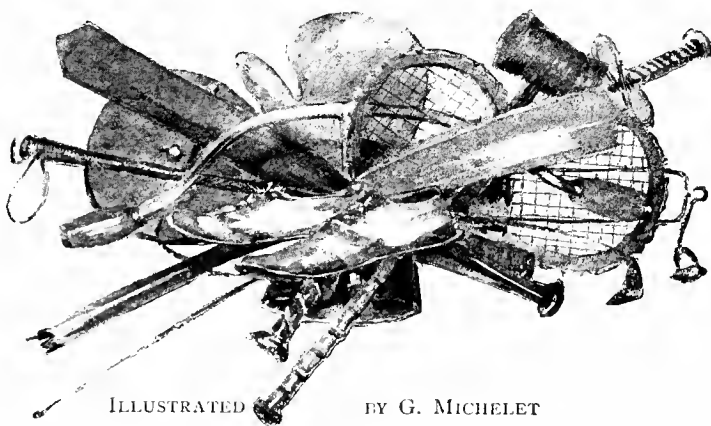


UN RÊVE SPORTIF.

AN ORIGINAL WAGER

BEING A
VERACIOUS ACCOUNT
OF A GENUINE BET

BY
A VAGABOND



ILLUSTRATED

BY G. MICHELET

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TO THE
Sportsmen of France,
IN APPRECIATION
OF THEIR KINDLINESS OF HEART, FRANK CORDIALITY
AND
GENEROUS HOSPITALITY,
THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED BY
THE AUTHOR.

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AN ORIGINAL WAGER

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE first scene of the trip which I am about to describe, took place in the luxurious smoke-room of the ——— Club. The elements necessary for a warm discussion were all present. We had dined well, we were enjoying our coffee and liqueurs, we were passing in critical review all the phases of modern life “from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter.” If these circumstances were not alone sufficient to start a difference of opinion—for surely no two men look upon life from the same standpoint, especially after a good dinner—there was still something that absolutely assured a metaphorical coming to blows. My host D—— and I are the best of friends. We have known each other from childhood, were at school together,

and have stood the crucial test of travelling together without any very serious quarrels, but we are, in our opinion on men and things, absolutely opposed to one another, and whenever we enter into a discussion it is never-ending and decidedly warm. It is only then that the fact of our being intensely *antipathique* appears. On my side, I will confess it, there is a wholesale contempt for what I call his "groovy" ideas, while he, on his part, has the most annoying and illogical habit of trying to reduce our discussions to the ridiculous level of a bet. Imagine my feelings, when I am discussing, say for example, the New Woman, and urging on D——, that after all her aspirations—as far as I, a poor bewildered mortal, can understand them—are not altogether so absurd and foolish as he would have them to be, on hearing him shout with a mighty voice, "I'll bet you a fiver that your New Woman if she had her club and her cosy house-dinner, wouldn't be able to tell Pomade from Cortailod. I bet she wouldn't. Will you take it?"

Is there any answer to such an appeal as that? Silence—contemptuous silence—is the only one, unless it were possible to take a bet on such an impossible subject.

Such are the peculiarities in D——'s and my characters, and they will explain the sequel. Without such a preface, I am afraid that the intelligent reader might write us down both mad, but I hope that now we shall escape with the epithet eccentric.

"Have another cigarette?" said D——, "and tell me what you think of the last French craze for cycling. I suppose they will soon begin to imagine that they can beat the world."

"I don't know about beating the world," I replied; "but certainly they are getting on in the way of sport, and we shall have to look to our laurels soon in a good many of its branches."

"Bosh!" said my thoroughly English host. "Why, it isn't in French blood to take up sport seriously. Now and again they send over one of their best men, and if he happens to beat one of our second-raters they imagine that they are the first sportsmen in the world."

"Now, my dear D——," said I, "why will you, who have never travelled in all your life, insist upon claiming an acquaintance with movements in foreign countries? You know you are intensely ignorant of everything that takes place outside the limit of the British Isles."

"Never travelled! What nonsense!" roared my host. "Why, I have been to Paris, Berne, Lausanne, and down to Vienna and Pesth."

"Excuse me, you have been to the Grand Hotel in Paris, the Bernerhof at Berne, the Hotel Gibbon at Lausanne, Sacher's and the Ungaria in Vienna and Pesth, but as for knowing anything about these places you might just as well have stayed at home and read Baedeker's account of them."

"Well, at any rate, I can read English papers, and to return to the subject of sport, I repeat that Frenchmen have no idea of what it means, and that sport really does not exist in France. I will admit that they run some English-bred horses and go in for cycling, and now and again a Frenchman wheels a barrow from Paris to Berlin, or some such feat like that is done, but as for real sport, why, they don't even know what it means."

Now I cannot sit quiet under a shower of sweeping, baseless assertions, even were they made by a fair woman, but to listen to D——'s laying down of the law without a word of remonstrance is more than I can bear, and the consequence was that in a minute we were engaged in a heated discussion. We argued and argued. My host shouted at the top of his voice whenever he felt that his state-

ments were weak, and hoped to make up for their feebleness by the strength of his voice. I became more persistent still, and at last—I am almost ashamed to confess it—I descended to his level, and actually, without, too, having the faintest idea of being taken up, proposed to strengthen my assertion by a bet.

“I’ll tell you what,” said I, losing all patience, “I wouldn’t mind betting you, just to show how firm is my belief in French sport, that for six weeks I could live in France earning my livelihood simply by sport, and not only that, I am sure I could gain enough to carry me back to London by the end of the six weeks.”

“Bosh!” was the exasperating answer.

“You may say ‘bosh’ as much as you like, but, if you are so convinced that you are right, take up my bet and you’ll see.”

“Right, I’ll take you,” he suddenly cried. “For how much?”

“Oh, I wouldn’t undertake it unless there was the chance of winning a fairly good round sum.”

“Will you make it a bet of £500?”

“Yes.”

“Done!”

“Done!”

And we shook hands on it, as is the manner of the youthful Briton when he makes a bet.

There were one or two other friends of D——'s



“WILL YOU MAKE IT A BET OF £500?”

in the room, and they looked upon us two as worthy of being incarcerated as raving maniacs.

“You don’t mean it?” said one of them, addressing me.

“Indeed I do,” I replied. “I have made the

bet in all sincerity, and I mean to win it, but of course, considering the amount of the bet and its peculiar nature, we must have some sort of a written account of it before I leave England and try my fortune in France, with sport as my only support."

This idea of mine was approved, and we set about drawing up a rough draft of conditions which would regulate the working of the bet. We appointed a stakeholder, and arranged for a meeting on the morrow for the purpose of paying in, each of us, our £500, and of drawing up a copy of definite rules and regulations.

"When do you start?" said D——

"To-morrow by the night train."

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

And so ended my share in the evening's talk. Henceforth it is a case of *acta non verba*, and I copy my diary, since it will best tell the story of my six weeks' wanderings in the fair land of France.

CHAPTER II

Conditions of Bet—Its difficulties—Preparations—Departure from Charing Cross—Reflections—Dover—Crossing the Channel—Calais—Search for a Bed—A grumpy and amorous Guide—A Bedroom at last—Departure from Calais on foot—Great Heat—Arrival at Guemps—An Atmosphere of Suspicion—Start from Guemps—Hot walk—Thunderstorm—Shelter—Inn struck by Lightning—Damp Arrival at St. Omer—Supper—Next Morning's depression—Kind Landlady—Theatre—A Beginning at last—Friends—Newspaper Notices—Interview with President—Landlady's curiosity satisfied—Chat in Café—Swimming Performances—Last Evening at St. Omer.

AT my interview with D—— and the stakeholder, the following conditions were
First Day. agreed upon—

1. I am to leave London with £2 only in my pocket.
2. I am to cross over to France, and during six weeks am to remain in any part of it that I may choose.
3. During the said six weeks, I am to earn my living by utilizing my knowledge of all branches

of sport, comprising all games, riding, bicycling, billiards, horse-racing, and swimming.

4. When lessons are given by me in any sport I am not to accept any sum above the ordinary tariff of the place.

5. The words "earn my living" are taken to mean that I am not to accept any present or charity Nor am I to accept any sum, which might, in the opinion of the stakeholders, be above the worth of the work done.

6. I may give during the six weeks no more than two lectures, which must be on some sporting subject, and the receipt of each must not exceed 35 francs.

7. The stakeholder M—— is to be referred to in any case in which I receive payments for lessons given or work done, and he has the right to order the return of all moneys which in his opinion are not fairly earned according to the spirit of the bet.

8. For each sum received I am to give a receipt, a copy of which is to be sent to the stakeholder. In case of payment, on my part, of over two francs, a receipt is to be obtained and shown.

9. I have no right to accept meals or invitations to stay in private houses unless payment either in money or in work is made.

10. I am particularly forbidden to make any arrangement whereby I might receive money, even for work done, on the condition that in case I win the bet the donor or lender will be repaid.

11. No money is to be borrowed except on the condition that it is repaid before the end of the six weeks and out of the money earned by sport.

12. The amount of £500 is to be deposited with the stakeholder both by me and D—— before my departure for France.

13. On the forty-second day after my arrival in France I am to present myself at the Club before midnight, having lived in France, paid my journey, and with the sum of £2, earned according to the foregoing conditions.

The night's rest and these hard-and-fast rules written on blue paper to give it an official air, made me feel somewhat foolish this morning. I am beginning to realize that I have undertaken something which will, to use a slang sporting term, "take a lot of doing." If they were not sufficient to bring me to a proper sense of the gravity of my enterprise, the visit to my banker's and the drawing of a £500 cheque impressed upon me the fact that the bet I had rather lightly made last night may land me in no end of dif-

ficulties. However, it is too late to draw back now.

I passed the afternoon arranging my affairs. Luckily I am on leave and so can spare the time, but I looked forward to spending the next two months in a more pleasant if less exciting way, in the North of Scotland.

My baggage consists of a knapsack and a small bag for my books—for I foresee many a weary hour alone. I am taking a change of clothes, flannel shirts and two white ones, a capacious diary, soap and other toilet necessities. Unfortunately I cannot find room for my indiarubber bath, so have to leave it out.

I left Charing Cross by the ordinary train which gets into Dover before the night boat starts. D—— and M—— and a few friends came to jeer me off. They indulged in a vast amount of chaff, and made all kinds of sinister prophesies about my being likely to be taken for an anarchist and spending my six weeks in France occupied in a branch of sport that is the French equivalent for our oakum-picking. I returned their unfeeling jokes with assumed smiles, and an assertion that I was in no way doubtful as to my ultimate success ; but when the train steamed off and I was left to my own company, I began to

think, for the first time, over my chance of winning the bet. Up to now, owing to the hurry and scurry of the whole day, I had no time to give to a serious consideration of how I was to embark upon and carry out my enterprise. As a matter of fact, I made the bet in a moment of anger, and was too proud to draw back. Sitting in the corner of a third-class carriage, bound for Dover and Calais, I entered into the pros and cons of my trip. First of all, I can speak French fluently, in that at least I have some of the elements of success. Then as to my abilities as a sportsman they are simply these—I can ride, bicycle, swim—perhaps above the average ; I can run a mile fairly well, and walk it at a very good racing pace ; I can row, too, better than the average man ; I am pretty good at boxing ; I know nothing of fencing ; I can do long-distance walks, having once done 65 miles in $18\frac{3}{4}$ hours, which I know is a mere nothing for the ordinary pedestrian racer, but considering it was over a bad road, I am not ashamed of it. These are my qualifications as a pure sportsman. Then I understood the laying-down of lawn-tennis courts. Of course I am fairly proficient in all the English games, such as cricket, football, and lawn-tennis, but there will be but little chance of my doing any-

thing in these branches in France. "How am I to begin?" I ask myself, and the question is a difficult one to answer. I am determined not to remain at Calais, for I shall certainly be mistaken for an escaped "Welsher" who is trying to earn some money in a novel and ingenious way. In fact, at Calais there are too many of the sporting fraternity, and they might be described as being of rather an "umbrageous" nature. But where am I to go? I do not answer the question, but decide to make no plans until I land in France.

Somewhere about ten o'clock I arrived at Dover and carried my scanty luggage myself from the town station on to the pier. The boat was timed to start in three-quarters of an hour, and I began to feel hungry. I determined to have a really good meal, cost what it might, and descended to the saloon. It was not out of any spirit of extravagance that I, with something like thirty shillings in my pocket to last me for six weeks in a strange land, ordered a seven-shilling dinner, but it was simply the outcome of deep consideration. I argued that as long as I had any money in my pocket, so long would I hesitate to plunge into the difficulties of my enterprise. What better way, then, was there of getting rid of my superfluity of

money than by eating a good square meal of good English beef and drinking a half-bottle of Beaume? When I came back on deck, smoking the post-prandial cigarette, I felt at peace with all men, and a certain amount of confidence in myself. Presently my equanimity was disturbed by a sea of rushing, crushing, roaring passengers, whom the night mail from London disgorged on to the little *Breeze*. Then came the shooting of the mail-baskets and heavy luggage down the slide, then the whistle, the splash of the ropes as they were cast off, and the little boat with some three hundred passengers on board steamed out of Dover harbour into the moonlit Channel.

Some one touched me on the shoulder. I looked round. It was a pompous acquaintance of mine, a great swell in our native county.

“What are you doing here?” he asked.

“Why, going across like yourself.”

“No ; but *here* I mean,” glancing round the fore-peak where I was sitting.

The tone in which the “here” was said, seemed to express the thought that no Englishman who respected himself could ever travel second-class on a steamer. Wishing to be quit of him, for I wanted to again put on my considering-cap, I answered—

"Oh, I've come a howler, and am leaving the country."

That settled him. He remained for appearances' sake for a few minutes in my neighbourhood, then he moved off, murmuring—

"Poor fellow, so sorry ; good-bye."

It was close upon one o'clock a.m. when we arrived at Calais. I got my baggage examined at once, and shouldering my knapsack made my way out of the darkly-lighted station. The revolving electric light showed me my way, which had to be carefully picked along the locks and gates of the docks. When I arrived near the town I perceived that it would be very likely that I should have some difficulty in getting a room, for every house and *café* was shut up. Chance favoured me this time, and at last I found a small *estaminet* that was still open. I made for it, and found the proprietor standing at the open door.

"Have you got a room to let for to-night?" I asked.

"No," was the grumpy reply.

"Could you tell me where I could find one? not too dear, you know."

"Wait a minute. I'll see when I have shut up *la boîte*."

I sat down on my knapsack on the pavement and waited until this operation was completed, then



CALAIS—THE SEARCH FOR A BED.

followed my conductor through some very narrow tortuous streets. The only words he vouchsafed were—

"Is a one-franc room too much for you?"

"No," said I, and we continued as before, finally coming out on to the Grande Place. Here he stopped before a funny little house wedged in between two bigger ones. There were no lights in the window, but my friend began throwing small stones at a window. Then a light was struck in the room, and the head and shoulders of a woman, very much *en déshabille*, appeared.

"What do you want?" she cried.

"This gentleman wants a room for to-night," answered my guide.

"Oh, it's you, Antoine," said the lady; "wait a minute while I put on something, and I'll come down."

"No, don't do that. You look very pretty as you are."

However, the lady was dressed, though somewhat scantily, when she opened the door for us. My guide immediately entered into a very animated conversation with her, during which he chaffed her very much about the airiness of her costume, but seemed totally to forget me. So I made bold to break the flow of sweet nothings by saying that I was anxious to have a room and to go to bed. The landlady looked rather disgusted at this inter-

ruption, but consented to show me my room, which she did after saying good-night to Antoine, and having, as I heard the smacking of lips, probably embraced him when my back was turned. My room was small, and but a mere garret, but I was tired and sleepy, and got into my bed and fell asleep in a few minutes, in spite of all the valorous attempts on the part of certain "light infantry" to bite me into wakefulness.

The town-hall clock, playing a pretty melody **Second Day:** as it struck seven, woke me up. I **Calais.** left my bed and struggled manfully to get as much as I could, in the way of ablutions, out of a diminutive jug of water and a ridiculously little basin. Then I descended below to the *café* to take my morning coffee and decide upon a plan of campaign. First of all, I went out and changed my money, and, translated into francs, it amounted to 21 francs 15 centimes—not a very large sum with which to arrive in a foreign country. As for my plans, I could think of no other but that of leaving Calais as soon as possible, and getting into the country to see whether I could find some rich landed proprietor who might wish to have a lawn-tennis court laid out. I therefore shouldered my knap-

sack, paid my bill, which amounted to two francs, and started off. My appearance in the streets aroused no small interest. Indeed, as I left the town I was followed by a small army of *gamins*, who, however, abstained from making any very cutting remarks. I passed out of the town by the Dunkirk road, but finding it looking very straight and uninteresting, turned to my right, and determined to make for the village of Marck. I had purchased a map of the district at Calais, so that I was able to take short cuts and avoid the hot, broiling high-roads. At about one o'clock I arrived at Marck, and stopped at a little inn to satisfy my hunger. My meal was simple. It consisted of a syrup and water, two pieces of bread-and-butter, and a piece of cheese. After a cigarette and half-an-hour's rest I again took to the road, but, my sack being cruelly heavy and the heat very great, I made up my mind to stop at the first little village. This turned out to be Guemps—a mere collection of about ten houses with a funny little church and its *presbytère*—and I put up at the *Estaminet du Centre*. The landlord looked upon me rather with suspicion. The fact is that everybody in France who leaves the ordinary travelling routes runs a very fair chance for being taken for

an Anarchist. *La chasse à l'Anarchiste* is just at the moment a most popular form of amusement, and every little village mayor is dying to distinguish himself by capturing a noted criminal. Coming as I do from Calais, the port where England's hordes pour in upon the continent, I feel that I shall in all likelihood have some difficulty. I was not very surprised, then, to be asked for my passport by his Worship of Guemps, though when he exclaimed on seeing it, "I don't understand a word of this. It might be anything," I could not resist asking him whether he imagined that English passports were written in French.

"But," he replied with simple wonderment, "I thought all passports were written in French, since it is the language used by diplomatists."

I succeeded somewhat in allaying the suspicions of my landlord by taking an interest in his sick wife, and prescribing some medicine for her ailment.

The village was terribly dull, not a soul stirring. I made an attempt to see the *cure*, but he was away. The landlord on my return told me that this same *cure* was "a very devil for travelling. He goes to Audruick every other day almost, and it's a good three leagues off."

I had noticed some way from the village the turrets of a château. I asked my host whether it was inhabited, the name, and a good many details about its occupier. His half-lulled suspicions were again aroused, and he answered, "Yes, there is a big house there, but let me tell you that there is, too, a big fierce dog." I abstained from further inquiries, and having supped on bread-and-cheese and beer, went to bed feeling rather down in the mouth, and, if the truth must be told, a little bit foolish.

In hand this morning, 21 francs 15 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent 1	10 map.
	55 lunch.
	55 stamps.
2	0 hotel.
4	20

Leaving 16 francs 95 cents in hand.

I got up at 7.30, awakened by the church bell
Third Day: ringing for Mass. I again prescribed
Guemps. for my landlord's wife, who seems
 to be suffering from some internal complaint.
 In return for my kindness in interesting myself
 in his wife's case, *le Propriétaire de l'Estaminet*

du Centre, as he somewhat pompously called himself, was good enough to weigh my knapsack—twenty-eight pounds, by no means a light burden. I asked for my bill with a certain amount of fear and trembling. It amounted to 2 francs 50 cents.

The weather was hot as I started on my walk, and still hotter as I passed through the pretty village of Audruick, looking very clean and neat. Instead of diminishing, the heat increased until it became something unbearable, and I foresaw that the result was likely to be a thunderstorm. The country was ugly, with very few trees, and monotonously flat. Later on, however, I came to a fairly high ridge, which I crossed and then descended into the village of Eperlecques about three o'clock. I entered the first cabaret and had a basin of soup, some bread and beer, the whole costing me thirty centimes. I did not remain long, but tried to get on my road as quickly as possible. I had in the morning made up my mind to get to the town of St. Omer, and see what could be done there, but I soon found that the storm would be upon me long before I could reach it. The first growls of thunder made me hasten my pace, and I was lucky enough to reach the village

of Moulle before the rain fell. I entered an inn, and there waited for the storm to pass. I can pretend to have had some acquaintance with thunderstorms, but this certainly was the very worst I ever experienced. The flashes followed each other in quick succession, and by the immediate rattle of the thunder I knew that we were in rather dangerous proximity to the centre of the storm. I perceived that my fellow-travellers, as well as the landlord and his wife, were every now and again furtively crossing themselves. I must confess, too, that I was by no means comfortable. Suddenly there was a vivid flash, followed by a crash. The landlady fell down in a dead faint, and everybody was more or less moved. The lightning had struck the chimney of the inn, and had then run down to the floor. There was no material damage done, and the good lady soon came to. The storm, however, continued, and the rain poured in torrents. It was not until nearly six o'clock that it finally moved off in a north-westerly direction. As soon as the rain had somewhat abated, I stepped forth and set my face towards St. Omer, which I managed to reach in a little over an hour's time, but I was drenched to the skin.

I put up at a little hotel which had been recommended to me at Guemps. Luckily for me, the hostess, it seems, is accustomed to the vagaries of my compatriots, for she received me kindly and without question, and immediately granted me a room.

What with the insufficiency of strengthening food—I had not tasted meat since my meal on board the *Breeze*—and the hard walking I had gone through during the last few days, I began to feel a little seedy. My position, too, was by no means encouraging, and it was with a feeling almost of despair that I sat down to an excellent supper of roast pigeon and a bottle of good wine. “*Ruat calum*,” I said to myself, “but I’ll have one good meal anyway.”

The wants of my inner man being thus adequately satisfied, I smoked my pipe with a sensation of absolute ease, feeling reckless and desperate, it is true, with regard to my bet, but happy in the satisfaction of having, at least morally, earned my good supper. And I could not help thinking that the good hostess of the Hôtel Ville de Lille would not be smiling so benignantly on her travel-stained guest, could she guess the state of his purse.

In hand this morning, 16 francs 95 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent 2	50 inn.
	5 ferry at canal.
	30 lunch.
	20 glass of cognac.
	20 beer.
	50 cigarettes.
	20 bread.
<hr/>	
3	95

Leaving 13 francs in hand.

Got up early feeling very uncomfortable. I am **Fourth Day:** afraid that the *régime* of the last two **St. Omer.** days has done me no good. I had no heart to go out and look for something to do, so I simply loafed about the town, which is a dear little specimen of a French provincial town. The ancient fortifications, by Vauban, are being rased to the ground to give place to pleasure-ground for the citizens. This is an innovation which is comprehensible, but why, in the name of the Great Antique, have they destroyed the grand old gates, which were both picturesque and artistic?

My landlady seeing, perhaps, that I was not

quite myself, proposed taking me out in her dog-cart. It was very kindly offered, and I accepted the offer with alacrity ; but I must confess that my depression was not altogether relieved by



THE OBJECT OF OUR EXCURSION WAS THE CEMETERY.

the fact that the object of our excursion was the cemetery. However, the air and the gay conversation of my landlady did me some good, and I returned to the hotel feeling somewhat better.

Before supper I sat down and boldly stared my situation in the face. Here I am in a comparatively expensive hotel, with about 13 francs in my pocket. I have so far not gained a single *sou*, and I can see very little likelihood of my doing so. True, I have not yet revealed the object of my journey to any one. I shall do so to-morrow to any official of any sporting society I can find here, and my success or failure will more or less depend on the interview. At any rate my life here is better than tramping through a desolate country with twenty-eight pounds on my back. Another thing for which I have to be thankful is, that I feel, when in company with other people, as gay as a lark ; to-night, for example, at supper, I made everybody roar with laughter, and enjoyed rallying a rather obtuse "commercial," as much as if I had already won my bet.

My landlady proposed going to the theatre. I could hardly refuse, but of course I cannot afford it. However my humour is now of the desperate sort, and I took a 1 franc 25 cent. ticket and laughed over the adventures of "Miss Helyett." But why, oh why, do all French caricatures of us make us keep continually saying "Oh yes" and "All right"? I am positive that I scarcely ever say "Oh yes"

and never "All right," except when it conveys what I mean to say. But this is the French idea of an ordinary English conversation—

"Oh yes, it is a beautiful day to-day."

"All right ; it is indeed."

"It is very hot. I am perspiring."

"Shocking ! Oh yes, all right, so it is."

Another thing that struck me to-night was the very bad way in which the actors pronounced the few English words they had to use. It reminds me of an incident which illustrates the contempt which the French have for our English laws of pronunciation. I was "assisting" at some races in the South of France, and had just put a modest five francs upon the favourite. At the conclusion of the race I asked a Frenchman standing by whether the favourite had won.

"No," said he, "it was an 'ootseedaire.'"

I was puzzled and looked at the card. I could not see "Ootseedaire's" name at all. I told my neighbour so. He looked at me with withering contempt for my ignorance, and proceeded to explain. He meant to convey to my English ears that an "outsider" had won, but his thoroughly French pronunciation of the word had put me completely off the track.

In hand this morning, 13 francs.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	1	25	theatre.
		50	drinks at cemetery.
		10	glass beer at théâtre.
	<hr/>	85	

Leaving 11 francs 15 cents in hand.

I rose early this morning and called at a shop **Fifth Day:** where they sold bicycles, and inquired **St. Omer.** about the officers of the Vélo-Club. (Vélocipède is the French word for bicycle—a safety is called a *bicyclette*. Bicycle Clubs are called Vélo-Clubs. *Vélodrome* is a bicycle track.) I found that the President lived some way out of St. Omer in the country, but the Secretary, Monsieur P——x, was at St. Omer. I called upon him, but found that he was out. I left word that I would call again in the afternoon, and strolled round to the Cathedral, a glorious building with a very magnificent pulpit. Then I wended my way back to lunch at the hotel. In the afternoon I called again on M. P——x, and this time found him at home. With a certain amount of hesitation and doubt as to the result of my interview, I gave an account of my bet *ab*

ovo, and begged him to help me as best he could. I was agreeably surprised at the enthusiastic way in which my request was received. "There can be no doubt," said Monsieur P——x, "about your ultimate success. I will see, at any rate, that you do not leave St. Omer without being helped on your way. I have the afternoon free, and if you will accompany me, I will take you round to everybody who might be likely to be interested in the thing, and we shall see what we can do."

These words encouraged me greatly, and lifted off my shoulders a weight of depression which had not left me since my arrival in France. It was with words of real sincerity that I thanked the Secretary of the Vélo-Club, and my step seemed firmer and lighter as we started forth to find out some means of my gaining a few *sous*.

Our first idea was to see if any of the officers in the barracks would care to have some lawn-tennis lessons. On going to the court we found that the chief players were away on leave. I made a suggestion about having a bicycle race, but there were too many difficulties in the way, especially as there is no track at St. Omer. My new friend suddenly asked me if I could swim. I told him that I was considered rather good at it.

“Well then,” said he, “what do you say to giving a kind of performance at the swimming-baths here? I could get plenty of people to come and see you, and you can charge a small entrance fee.”

I cordially assented to the proposition, and we at once made our way to the baths to interview the proprietor as to the possibility of getting the baths for an hour one day. Fortunately, this gentleman was a real sportsman, and no sooner had my bet been explained to him than he at once placed his swimming-bath at my disposal from ten to eleven the day after to-morrow. I thanked him heartily for his kindness, and then went off with Monsieur P——x to the offices of the two local newspapers, where I explained to the editors the reason for my presence at St. Omer. They both promised to insert a short account in to-morrow's issue. Being now fairly tired with our walking to and fro on the hard pavement, my kind friend invited me to drink to the success of my enterprise, which I did with feelings of much gratitude towards him.

If I succeed in winning my bet, decidedly I shall owe a great deal to Monsieur P——x, and this, my first plunge into the real work of my task is made under the happiest auspices. With regard to my

swimming performance, I do not exactly know what to do to please my audience. I am a good swimmer, but I can hardly call myself a Beckwith. Besides, my *forte* lies in long-distance swimming, and that kind of natation is not interesting for a performance. However, I hope the spectators will not be very critical.

My landlady, who is the kindest woman imaginable, is not altogether exempt from the feminine failing of curiosity. I have done my best to excite it by mysterious remarks as to the reasons for my presence at St. Omer, but to-night I have told her just enough to make her spend the night in guessing my business. On my arrival at the hotel, I told her that if she looked in to-morrow's paper she would see why I came to the town, and what I was going to do. In spite of many entreaties I absolutely refused to say a word more.

Not content with having given up the whole afternoon to me, Monsieur P——x came to the hotel and took me to the Café de l'Harmonie, in front of which the military band was playing. He introduced me to his friends and fellow citizens, who all received me in the most hearty fashion, and expressed their conviction as to my ultimate success.

FRANCS. CENTS.

In hand this morning	11	15	
Spent	...	...	0 10 postcard.
In hand	...	..	11 5

To-day the newspapers of the place, *L'Indé-*
Sixth Day: *pendant du Pas de Calais* and *Le*
St. Omer. *Mémorial Artésien*, published the fol-
 lowing notices—

From the *Indépendant*—

“AN ORIGINAL BET.

“We received yesterday the visit of one of our
 genial fellow-citizens, who presented to us an
 English gentleman of London, who is staying at
 St. Omer under such extraordinary circumstances
 that we think they will interest our readers.

“The gentleman in question, a keen amateur of
 all kinds of sport, has lately made a wager (during
 a discussion in which he praised the hospitality of
 Frenchmen) of £500, that during six weeks he will
 travel in France, eat, sleep, and drink without the
 help of charity or presents either of money or kind,
 earning the wherewithal simply and solely by
 utilizing his sporting capacities.

“Arrived at St. Omer on Monday, he intends

giving a swimming performance at the Baths to-morrow from ten to eleven o'clock.

"We take great pleasure in warmly advising our readers to witness the performance. Outside all other questions, the originality, alone, of the bet renders it interesting: it is much more so for us since it was made in honour of French Sport."

The *Mémorial* has the following—

"An English gentleman has made an original bet, which, if won, will bring him in the sum of £500. He left London with 50 francs in his pocket as sole journey-money, and must remain for six weeks in France, finding board and lodging.

"For this, he does not count upon a miracle like that of the loaves and fishes, but simply upon his qualities as a sportsman. The gentleman is not only an accomplished cyclist, but also a teacher and lecturer capable of speaking on all branches of sport.

"To-morrow morning, between ten and eleven, at the École de Natation, he will show diverse manners of swimming, which will certainly interest all those who would like to encourage this bold sportsman.

"The entrance fee will be only 25 centimes."

These notices will undoubtedly have the effect of

augmenting the number of spectators, and I ought to be able to earn enough money to enable me to pay my hotel bill and get on to my next stopping-place.

Before the two local newspapers had appeared this morning, I was well on my way to visit the President of the Northern Federation of Cyclists, whose château is situated some eight miles off. The road was rather dreary, and the weather threatening. I was shown into the President's study, and soon after he entered the room. He expressed himself very much interested in my enterprise, but I am afraid my explanation of it was not altogether clear, for he offered me the sum of five francs to "help me on my way." Of course I refused, but I was none the less grateful for his kindness. What tickled me very much was the novelty of the situation. It was something new to me to be asked to accept money to "help me on my way," and I could not help thinking of the resemblance in some respects between myself and some of those voluble better-class beggars who are so numerous in England. M. le Président did not insist, but very kindly gave me a letter of introduction to the President of one of the Bicycle Clubs at Lille. After thanking him for his well-meant offer

and for the letter, I quitted the château and arrived at St. Omer in time for lunch. Here I found that my landlady had at last solved the mystery of my "profession or occupation," as the police circulars say, and instead of feeling, as well she might, that after all I might not be the best of customers, she expressed herself as extremely pleased that I had come to her hotel, and showed her warm interest in my bet by asking innumerable questions and uttering countless wishes for my success. Not content with this, she had determined to do honour to her extraordinary guest, for on going to my bedroom I found it bright with a mass of nice clean lace, and altogether newly decorated by numerous little knickknacks.

In the evening, Monsieur P——x again came and took me to one of the *cafés*, where, with him and his friends, we kept up an animated conversation. A would-be sportsman, a stranger to St. Omer, and, I should think, a Gascon, kept us all very lively by upholding against all comers that quails were not migratory birds, but always hid themselves in the winter. I have enough of bets as it is, or I should have wagered with him on the subject.

I have had to answer a good many important

letters, and the postage makes a considerable hole in my pocket.

In hand this morning, 11 francs 5 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	0	10 cigarettes.
	0	10 postcard.
	2	0 letters, stamps.
	2	20

Leaving in hand 8 francs 85 cents.

Got up early and arrived at the baths a good
Seventh Day: hour and a half before the time.

St.Omer. Luckily the weather was brilliantly fine. The proprietor was more than kind. When I say that he gave up a whole hour of his day, during which he was bound to lose a fair sum of money, it will give some idea of his hospitality and his love of sport.

The people came before the time, and there was no money-taker. I took the post, and received fifty centimes from two small boys. I don't think that I ever felt more shy in my life. Of course it was ridiculous, but there was a feeling of sacrilege almost in taking money myself for something connected with sport. I resigned my functions immediately, for the wife of the proprietor, with

womanly quickness of perception, had taken notice of my embarrassment, and came to the rescue.

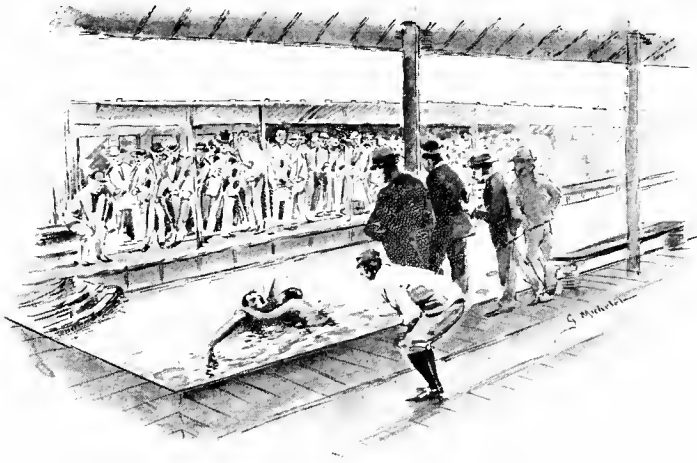
Soon after ten o'clock there was a fair "house," among the spectators being several ladies—a fact which did not lessen the feeling of nervousness and shyness. I divested myself of my clothes and jumped into the water, at first simply showing the different strokes, such as the racing, side and breast strokes. I then mounted a step-ladder placed on the deep side of the bath, and dived four or five times from the top. Although it was held by two persons, it was rather a rickety structure, but I managed somehow each time to get off fairly well.

The next item of my performance was also diving, but this time after plates, which I was able to bring up without much difficulty, although the water was far from clear. On emerging after my third dive in quest of plates, I was for the first time applauded by the spectators. I began to understand why actors are so anxious for applause. I experienced myself the exhilarating effect it has on one. At the close of the diving exhibition, I returned to the cabin and clothed myself in an old cast-off suit of the proprietor's, and, plunging into the bath, showed how to undress in the water. This was an eminently successful show, and was

warmly applauded; so much so, indeed, that I added a turn to my performance and announced my intention (if somebody who could not swim would trust himself to my tender mercies) of showing how to save life in the water.

A half-witted coachman of one of the local doctors volunteered for this service, and, after undressing, came to me for instructions. I told him that all he had to do was to jump into the water, and when I came to him to do exactly as I directed. He nodded, as though he perfectly well understood me, and immediately plunged into the water. I waited a little time to see where he was going to show himself on the surface, and then followed him. As soon as I got near him he grasped me firmly round the neck in such a way that I was almost choked, and entwined his legs round mine so that I was powerless. I therefore made no effort to keep on the surface, but dropped with my burden down to the bottom, at the same time loosening his clasp hands and taking hold of him by his hair. We again came to the top, and this time I told him that unless he did as I told him, we should again sink. Fortunately he had recovered somewhat his presence of mind, and followed my directions so well that I was able to swim the length of

the bath with him. My efforts were rewarded by loud applause, and I left the bath, announcing, as I have seen street-acrobats do, that the "performance was now concluded." I had remained in the water for nearly an hour, and felt chilled and trembling,



HE GRASPED ME FIRMLY ROUND THE NECK.

but a brisk rub down soon put me to rights, and I came out of my cabin feeling none the worse. The receipts amount to twenty francs exactly—so exact indeed that I shrewdly suspect that the sportsmen who looked on must have made a private collection on my behalf, and so brought up the sum to the round number.

By the advice of Monsieur P——x I shall start to-morrow for Lille. He tells me that if I am to win my bet, the best way is to go to the biggest towns. He informs me, too, that Lille is very “sportif,” and that I shall be sure to meet with numerous sportsmen who will be sure to help me on my way.

I spent my evening at the *café* with my good friends of St. Omer. Their kindness and geniality and their evident sincerity in wishing me success, have really touched me. I feel quite a wrench at leaving the place to-morrow, so hearty has been my reception here.

In hand this morning, 8 francs 85 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	0	20	cigarettes.
	0	10	postcards.
	0	30	leaving 8 francs 55 cents.
Received (for performance)	20	0	„
	28	55	„ in hand.

CHAPTER III

Settling the Bill—Amusing Orderly—Arrival at Lille—Presentation of Letters—Lady 'Cyclists—Economy—Races at the Vélodrome—Experience with the Loafers—A Loafer's Tale—First Earnings at Lille—Talk with my Employer—Drunken Briton—Billiard Lessons—Penury and little Food—An Idea—Presented with Bill—Cannot pay—Am stopped by Landlord—Scene—A kind Guarantor—"Monsieur, you have beautiful calves"—Coaching a Four-oared Galley—Arrange for Performance at Vélodrome—Difficulties of finding Horses—At the Horse Fair—A Dangerous Drive—Horses obtained—Race against a Frenchman—Practice—Become a Lion—Concert—Fame—Horses are refused—Horse Hunting—Newspaper Notices—French Tobacco—Purchase of Horse—Soirée Bacchique—Performance at Vélodrome—Four Kilometer Record—Twenty Kilometer Race—Exciting Incidents—Enthusiasm of Spectators—Congratulations—Newspaper Notices—Experience with the Agent de Police—Departure from Lille—Adventure in the Train—Arrival at Valenciennes—Bad News.

IT was with rather an uneasy mind that I asked
Eighth Day: for my bill this morning. Having but
St. Omer 28 francs in hand, there would be,
and Lille. I imagined, but little margin left after
paying for four days' board and lodging. I was
fairly staggered when the ridiculously small

amount of 10 francs was given as the sum-total of my expenses. I called for the landlady and remonstrated; it is rather a novel experience for me to remonstrate about the smallness of my bill. I protested that the sum I was called upon to pay was absurdly small, and that, although I was truly grateful to her for her kindness in wishing to let me off as easily as possible, yet I insisted upon a fair bill, since the conditions of my bet did not allow me to accept charity. Very reluctantly she gave in, and presented a bill of 22 francs and some odd centimes. My fare to Lille amounting to 3 francs 30 centimes, by paying my bill I should have arrived at my destination with something like three francs in my pocket. It was too much to contemplate with composure, so I was able to please my kindest of landladies and afford myself considerable convenience, by leaving ten francs of my bill to be paid when my finances shall be on a sounder basis. I left the dear little hotel amid cries of "*bon voyage!*" and "*bonne chance!*" ringing in my ears, and I must confess to feeling sad and sorrowful at leaving such hearty and kindly folk. Whether I win or lose, I shall certainly come home by way of St. Omer, and give myself the opportunity of thanking the hostess of the Hôtel Ville de Lille.

I travelled to Lille in a third-class compartment, which I found very hard and very uncomfortable. An officer's orderly was travelling in the same carriage, and we entered into conversation. He seemed puzzled by my accent, and at last exclaimed—

“You are not a Frenchman, are you?”

“No.”

“Then, of what nationality are you?”

“Try and guess,” I said, wishing to know whether my accent betrayed me.

“You are not an Englishman,” he began.

“Well?”

“You have the accent of a Flemish Belgian.”

“No; I'm not a Belgian.”

“Don't say you are a German,” he exclaimed, as though the fact of my being a Teuton would oblige him to run me through *instanter* with his bayonet.

“No, I'm not a German.”

“An Austrian?”

“No.”

“An Italian?”

“No.”

“A Russian?”

“No.”

"Then what the devil are you?" he burst out at last.

"An Englishman."

"Well, that is extraordinary. I once heard Coquelin, the comedian, take off the English accent, but his was not a bit like yours."

"For all that, I am an Englishman, though perhaps I have little accent."

Being convinced of my nationality, the vivacious little soldier began to look upon me in much the same way that London street boys would look upon a pig-tailed Chinaman. He examined my clothes and my necktie, asked to see the English book I was reading, touched my boots and remarked on the excellence of the leather, and altogether treated me as if I were an extraordinary being that had dropped out of the moon. He was a good fellow at heart and very lively. He told me a good deal of his life in barracks. Talking of his officers, he said that as a rule they were generally liked, but there was one, he said, whom all the men in his company cordially hated. "If that company," remarked my companion with a certain hardness of voice, "makes a campaign, its captain will be the first to be shot, not from in front, though, not from in front, you may be sure," and from the look in

his little twinkling eyes, suddenly become grave and fixed, I was inclined to believe him.

We parted company at Hazebrouck, my little soldier and I, and he passed out of the station waving his hand in my direction. I was sorry to lose his company, for he made me forget the hardness of the seats. I employed the remainder of my time in examining the letters which I had from St. Omer for the sportsmen of Lille, and deciding on some plan of action. In a case like mine there is not a moment to be lost in getting something to do. I cannot forget that I have not only to earn enough money to keep myself, but also sufficient to enable me to pay my passage home to London, and have the sum of £2 in hand. The task seems awfully difficult, but a good deal will depend on Lille; in fact it will be my Austerlitz or my Waterloo.

When I stepped out of the big, roomy railway-station, and followed a small boy who had taken charge of my luggage, I began to feel quite frightened by the bustle and hurry of a prosperous, flourishing modern town. Here was a different kind of man to the genial easy-going inhabitants of dear St. Omer. I seemed to sink very rapidly into the ranks of those who gather into a big town to earn their crust of bread anyhow. I had, too,



FRIGHTENED BY THE BUSTLE AND HURRY OF A PROSPEROUS,
FLOURISHING MODERN TOWN.

been told that the people of Lille were all busy business men, and would have little time to give to me. They had been described to me as cold and "somewhat English," and I was not at all in high spirits when I dismissed my boy with the reward of 20 centimes, and deposited my luggage at the little hotel to which I had been recommended.

I kept up my courage, however, by immediately plunging *in medias res*. Armed with the letters of introduction which I had obtained from St. Omer, I sallied forth into the busy streets. Lille is a town of some 200,000 inhabitants, and is quite as go-ahead as Manchester ; in fact, I have heard it called "le Manchester de France." The streets are well paved and well kept, and the Grande Place, whither I first wended my way, is a very fine one. I presented my letter to a journalist, Monsieur D——s, who promised to do all he could for me, and took me to see one of the chief members of the Committee of the Vélodrome here. He was unfortunately not at home, and not wishing to trespass too much on his time I quitted him, and delivered my next letter also to a journalist, who expressed his wish to help me in every way I then made my way to the house of another

gentleman, Monsieur M——t, who received me with the utmost kindness, and at once gave me a letter for one of the leading sportsmen here, telling me at the same time that by making his acquaintance I was more likely to get something to do than with anybody else. I, accordingly, returned to my hotel and lunched, leaving directly afterwards for the suburb where the sportsman lived. Unfortunately I was not able to find him at home, and came back to my hotel.

I strolled round the town and admired it greatly. The public gardens are particularly fine, as well as the “Musée des Beaux Arts.” There is, as usual in all French towns, no lack of statues. One, surmounting a Doric column in the Grande Place, celebrates the passing of the decree by the National Assembly of the Revolution that “Lille had deserved well of the country”

I suppose it is the reaction after the cordiality of the good people of St. Omer, but somehow I feel inexpressibly sad to-night. I can understand now that the solitude of a big town is immensely greater than that of even a sand desert. At least in the desert you are face to face with nature, but in town, man and his works stand between you. With which reflection I go to bed.

In hand this morning, 28 francs 55 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent 12	0	part of hotel bill.
3	30	railway.
	5	newspaper.
	20	boy for luggage.
	15	tramway.
	50	stamps.
2	20	dinner and luncheon.
18	40	

Leaving in hand 10 francs 15 cents.

I spent most of my morning in the public
Ninth Day: gardens sitting on the seats with other
Lille. idlers, and feeling far from cheerful.
 My bad humour took the form of criticizing the
 lady bicyclists of Lille. I have never before
 seen ladies riding in the knickerbocker costume.
 It is not altogether ugly except where the ankles
 and calves of the wearer are wanting in symmetry.
 To my mind a pretty ankle is one of the
 sweetest sights a man can see, but it is abso-
 lutely depressing to see women riding about in
 the bloomer costume and showing ankles, feet
 and calves without a single curve in them. And
 this digression leads me to another. I always

remark when I come to France that Frenchwomen are much less chary of showing their ankles than the ordinary Englishwoman. Patriotism would put it down to lack of modesty, but truth compels me



SITTING ON THE SEATS WITH OTHER IDLERS.

to say that I believe the true reason is that Frenchwomen are much better *chaussées* than our own, and as a rule have prettier feet and ankles. They in their turn are surpassed by the Viennese, whose feet are marvels of beauty, all curves and grace. I once heard a man who had travelled not a little

describe his ideal woman. "Complexion like an Englishwoman's, feet and ankles like those of a Viennese, a Hungarian woman's bust, and an American's head of hair."

I had still another letter of introduction to the President of one of the numerous cycle clubs here, and I presented it. He was most kind, and left his business to take me round to a *café* to introduce me to a friend or two. I also received an answer from Monsieur D——e, whom I had gone to see yesterday and found not at home. He tells me that he shall be to-morrow at the Vélodrome, where he hopes to have the pleasure of meeting me.

As economy is the order of the day, I did not lunch to-day, but dined on 50 centimes' worth of bread-and-butter, washed down by beer. My English tobacco is now quite exhausted, so farewell pipe! Till we land together on English soil!

In hand this morning, 10 francs 15 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	0	10	newspaper.
	0	30	cigarettes.
	0	50	dinner.
	0	20	beer.
	<hr/>	<hr/>	
	1	10	

Leaving in hand 9 francs 5 cents.

I obtained a card of entry to the races at the **Tenth Day:** Vélodrome to-day, and after spending **Lille.** a lazy morning wandering about the streets, looking in at the nicely-laid tables of the numerous restaurants with a certain feeling of envy, I proceeded to the Vélodrome. I was surprised to see, instead of a mere ordinary track such as one meets in an English country town, a magnificently arranged place. It is surrounded with a stout wooden boarding, and the gates are imposing. The track itself is of asphalt, and of oval shape. At the two ends, the curves being rather small, the outer edge is raised considerably, so that bicycles can be ridden at the same pace there as on the flat. Inside the track there is another one of cinder, which can be utilized for foot or horse-races. There is an excellent building for the competitors, with a douche and all the necessary bathing requisites attached. A grand stand of very fine proportions, a *café*, and the usual stand for the judges and timekeepers, combine to make the Lille Vélodrome one of the best in the world. M. Baert was the architect, and although his first experience in bicycle-track constructing was gained here, his success was so great and universally recognized, that he was

asked to alter the celebrated Buffalo track in Paris.

There was a moderate attendance at the races. It must be remembered that the Vélodrome does not belong to a club, but is a company, which was formed for the purpose of constructing the place, and derives its revenue from receipts taken on the occasions of the rather frequent race-meetings that are held. The comparative scarcity of spectators was due, no doubt, to the fact that bicycle races are not particularly exciting things to watch. As a matter of fact, when you have seen one, you have seen enough to last your life-time. Of course, if celebrated riders take part, it is quite another question, and the race has many more points of interest; but, on the whole, I think that most people will agree with the statement that ordinary bicycle races are slow.

The remarks of a *sous-officier*, seated near me, made up somewhat for the sameness of the races. His cause of complaint was that they only commenced half-an-hour after the advertised time. "Cr-r-é nom d'un chien," he cried to his neighbours, "if anything went wrong with the army, those are the people," pointing to the officials, "who would kick up no end of a row, and they actually begin

half-an-hour after the advertised time." His complaints, I imagine, were not ill-received by the spectators in his immediate neighbourhood.

After sitting listening to the *sous-officier* and watching the races, I got up and made for the judges' stand, where I at last met Mr. D——e, to whom I had presented my letter. He received me very cordially, and immediately promised to do his very best to help me. "I have a good many friends here," he said, "come with me and drink a glass of beer, and we'll see what we can do." I followed him to the *café*, where I was introduced to a goodly company of his friends seated round a table. I was immediately pressed to give an account of my bet, which I proceeded to do. They listened with great attention to my tale, and at its close all, nearly without exception, promised me material help. With one accord they seemed to be particularly weak in a certain branch of sport, and they begged me to help them by giving them lessons. So to-morrow I shall have something to do, and I hope that I have come to the end of my wanderings in the public gardens.

To-morrow, perhaps, may lead to ultimate success and a triumphant home-coming.

Spent nothing. In hand, 9 francs 5 cents.

My first appointment to-day was for one o'clock, **Eleventh Day: Lille.** so I had plenty of time to contemplate once again the beauties of the Lille parks, and to experience the hardness of the seats therein. I am become quite a regular *habitué* of one particular spot in the garden, and now recognize and am recognized by my fellow-loafers. They, poor fellows, are out of work, I imagine, and come to the public gardens to have a quiet rest, and to bask in the sun when there is any. There is a link of unexpressed sympathy between us all; I, of course, cannot quite claim to being in the same state as they are, but we are all at one in having nothing to do, and in the evident depression there is written on our faces. To-day for the first time one of them spoke to me.

"You are not a Frenchman," he said in a brusque voice.

I told him I was an Englishman.

"Then, why do you come to this seat every morning?"

"Because I have nothing to do, and would prefer sitting out in the open air to remaining in a room."

"Why don't you go to a *café*?"

"Because, my good friend," I replied, rather

nettled at these repeated questions, "I have not enough money to spend at *cafés*, though why you should ask all these questions is more than I quite understand."

"Oh, if you object to being spoken to, I'm sure I'm not anxious to carry on a conversation," said the man, throwing himself into a more comfortable position, and folding his arms as if he meant to go to sleep. He was strangely dressed—altogether ragged—but I could see that his clothes had once been good, and that they had been made for him. As I looked upon his face there was such a terrible look of sadness, of struggle, and of failure, that my heart melted, and I again addressed him.

"If I have been rude, Monsieur, please excuse me," I said. "Don't be angry with me, the world is too hard as it is to make one wish to leave an enemy where one might leave a friend."

At these words, his face lit up with one of the sweetest smiles I have ever seen on a man's face, and he stretched out his hand and shook mine.

"Oh, I am just as much to blame as you are," said he, "I had no business to cross-question you as I did. You are quite right, though, about making friends. A man who makes an enemy

where he might make a friend is a most decided fool."

It did not take me long to see that my new acquaintance was a man of education and no mean intelligence. Perhaps he thought the same of me, for I could see in his every look and gesture the question, "How the devil did you come to this?" He evidently took me for one of the broken-down frequenters of the gardens. The experience was new, and I took care to allow him to remain under the impression. He talked of everything, books, politics, sociology, science, and the drama with the volubility of a true Parisian. For about half-an-hour, I am sure, he quite forgot that he was rather a ragged, poverty-stricken loafer, only some few degrees removed in appearance from a professional beggar.

At last I asked him boldly what had brought him down.

"A woman," he replied curtly.

I stopped questioning him, and looked at his face with a new interest. So my acquaintance was the hero of a love story. Trying to allow for the ravages of privation, I reconstructed his features. Although, now hollow-cheeked, unshaven, and a little blear-eyed, he must have been

at one time a handsome man. His eyes were still fine, although somewhat sunken. As I was watching him thus he looked up suddenly and caught my eye.

“Let’s make a bargain,” he said ; “I’ll tell you my tale, and you’ll tell me yours.”

I agreed, and he told me the story of his downfall. It was full of details which were not nice. Infatuated by the charms of a married woman, he declared his love to her and was repulsed. For nearly two years he hung upon the skirts of the lady, deserting his work and living simply on his capital. He was particular to impress upon me that the passion was one purely of the senses, and that the tortures of jealousy he suffered were never to be forgotten. Gradually he spent all his money, lost his credit, but still he hovered round the woman, ready to answer her every beck and call. At last he was simply sold out, his parents refused to help him at all, and the woman for whom he had ruined himself, turned her back on him. “There was a moment when I could have strangled her, I hated her so. And now I suffer the most frightful pangs of jealousy at the thought that I have dropped out of her circle, and probably shall never recover my place. But I am so weak that

if to-morrow she spoke to me, I would again be at her feet. I know she behaved as one of the vilest of women, but then you see it is desire that burns in me, not love."

Poor fellow! I felt so sorry for him. My English blood makes his tale seem somewhat absurd and ridiculous, and yet the wretched man was, I feel sure, telling me the truth, and actually had ruined himself for a worthless, unloving, and, probably, unlovable woman.

I told him my tale, then he was interested. "I used to be a sportsman myself," said he. "Indeed, before I met that woman I was *un amateur passionné du sport*."

Just before we separated, I inquired as delicately as I could whether he was in want.

"I haven't eaten since yesterday morning," said he, "but I hope to earn a few *sous* this afternoon."

I opened my purse and offered him a two-franc piece. His eyes glittered, but he held up his hands in protestation.

"I couldn't think of it," said he, "you might lose your bet. I'm a sportsman myself—no, really,—well—no, I cannot. As a loan? Well—well—God bless you!" and he turned away with wet eyes and a very shaky voice. I never saw

him again, but I shall not forget that sadly ludicrous struggle between his wish to keep up his reputation as a sportsman and his intense desire to have the wherewithal to satisfy his hunger.

Having given away the money destined for my mid-day meal, I was able to keep my appointment at the rather uncomfortable hour of one o'clock without risking an indigestion by hastily quitting the table. My work was that of examining a horse, which I did thoroughly and with a due sense of the importance of trying really and truly to earn the sum of four francs, which was handed me as a remuneration for my services. Although the sum, considering the very slender state of my purse, was far from being unwelcome, yet the pleasure of being once again seated on a decent arm-chair and having a pleasant conversation was ever so much greater. My employer, as I suppose I may call him, is one of those clever intellectual men who watch popular movements and political combinations, not with a view of gaining any particular material advantage from the study, but, by comparing them to those that have gone before, he tries to construct a theory which will aid him in making a fairly accurate prediction as to the future. It was natural there-

fore for us to drift into the question of Anarchy. We were not altogether agreed in a good many points. I tried to show that repressive measures alone were insufficient to stamp out the Anarchists. History bears me out in saying that in nine cases out of ten, a body of men holding opinions which may only contain one per cent. of truth, flourishes rather than declines under mere persecution. Try to prove to them first by other and kinder methods that they are professing opinions at variance with truth and right, and then repress them as you will. Of course by this I do not for one moment defend Ravachol, Vaillant, Henri, and Cesario, but I think that the persecution of mere theorizing Socialists has in part created the Anarchists. And then in France, politicians seem to have ignored entirely the important rôle which religion plays among the masses of a country's population. If you abruptly change the milk diet of a child to that of animal food, there can be no doubt that the infant will suffer. The French people have been fed on the pap—whether it is wholesome or not it is not my business to say—of the priest. Suddenly this is abstracted, and they are thrust upon a vast sea of materialism, atheism, and infidelity, without the amount of education requisite to prevent them

from sinking down into the depths of sullen despair. M. Jaurès in the Chamber particularly pointed this out. Addressing those who had done their utmost to overthrow all religion, he said, "You have taken away from the people those soft lullabies which formerly sent them into a sweet sleep. They are now thoroughly awake, and in a state of excitement." Religion plays perhaps the greatest part in a nation's internal history. If it is to die, it must die out slowly and by degrees. To extinguish it suddenly is to invite disaster, and to throw the people into a terrible chaos.

Monsieur P——i, my host, thought the best plan would be to deport all Anarchists and let them try to carry into execution their wild projects where they can do no harm but to themselves.

My host told me that he had been educated at the same school as Prince Alexander of Battenberg, Prince of Bulgaria. Mentioning his abdication, I asked if anybody could furnish the real reason why, when brought back in triumph to his capital, he should have then decided to abdicate. "I cannot pretend to give you the whole reason," said M. P——i, "but I can give you a part. When the Prince was at the height of his power, soon after his victory of Slivnitza, he came to Ostend and

sent for me. He treated me as an old school-fellow, and chatted about the days we had passed together as boys. 'But now it is all so different,' he said: 'oh, I am so tired of being a ruler. I want to have a castle and dogs and horses and, above all, quiet.' "

It was not until four o'clock that I left M. P.—i's house and went back to my hotel. I was writing in my room, when the waiter came in and politely requested me to be kind enough to step down-stairs and help a compatriot in difficulties. I did so, and found a compatriot very much in difficulties—as drunk as a lord, and abusing everybody all round. A railway-porter was standing by him, and the hotel-keeper was in vain trying to make him understand. He paid no attention to anybody, but swore at everybody all round, from the landlord to the boots. I first of all asked what was the matter. The hotel-keeper explained that the Englishman had just arrived from Paris, and had refused to give up his ticket. As they could not be bothered at the station, they sent a porter with him with instructions not to leave him until he had either delivered up his ticket or paid the equivalent. I addressed my drunken compatriot in English. His torrent of oaths at once ceased,

and he lurched towards me as though he intended to embrace me. I kept him off, and asked him whether he had a ticket.

"Dunno," he hiccupped. "Yer shee itsh like thish. I got in shtrain at Parish and shaid to George, getsh me ticketsh. So he gotsh me ticket and now I dontsh know where 'tish. Where am I? Don't care tshinker's d—n. What deush that railway-porter wantsh here? Tellsh him to go."

I sobered him somewhat by telling him that if he didn't either give up his ticket or pay its equivalent he would most likely be landed in a police-cell. As he persisted in saying that he had lost his ticket, I told him to hand over the money. This he could not do since he had no French money, and so I conducted him to a money-changer's, where he got a five-pound note exchanged. Then, just as he was going to pay the sum demanded, he found his ticket, which was all the time in his purse. The porter had stood all his vagaries with the greatest patience, and I suggested that he might give him something. This he did with great alacrity and generosity, but I could not help laughing outright when he observed with a solemn shake of his finger, as he

delivered a five-franc piece to the man, "Now, whatshever yer dosh wish it, dontsh shpend itsh in drink."

I took charge of him and accompanied him to his bedroom, where I was surprised to be shown a pocket-book containing over £400, which this drunken imbecile was carrying about with him. I therefore used all my persuasive powers to get him to bed, and about eight o'clock I left him sleeping in his boots, which no words of mine could persuade him to take off.

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
In hand this morning	9	5
Received for examining horse	4	0
	13	5

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
Spent	0	10 newspaper.
	0	30 beer.
	1	0 dinner.
	2	0 charity.
	3	40

Leaving in hand 9 francs 65 cents.

I saw my repentant but now sober compatriot, **Twelfth** and put him into the train for Calais, **Day: Lille.** receiving all the time expressions of the deepest gratitude. My appointment with M.

D——e resulted in an arrangement whereby I may gain a few francs by giving a lesson in lawn-tennis. I went home and got my shoes and accompanied four or five members of the Tennis Club to the courts. There are two of them, one grass and the other asphalt. The former was not yet ready, so we played on the other. I was able to beat them all one after the other, but one man gave me a certain amount of difficulty. They all have a very good idea of the game, and with practice would make very good players. I played from two o'clock to seven-thirty, getting through ten setts and about eighty games, so that I felt a little tired towards the end. I returned to the hotel and received five francs for my work—which sum, I think, was well-earned. Afterwards I gave a billiard "lesson" to one of my Sunday acquaintances. He was, however, a master in the art, and although I am a fair player he got one hundred and ten points while I was getting twenty-nine. I accepted the tariff-price of five francs, though I informed my "pupil" that I should have to refer to the stakeholder the question of whether I could accept it or not.

I had no lunch to-day, nor did I take a mid-day meal yesterday, and this leads me to remark that

I am decidedly of opinion that we eat too much in ordinary life. For example, I played to-day for five hours, having had nothing to eat since eight o'clock in the morning, when my breakfast consisted of three rolls and a cup of coffee. Far from feeling weaker than usual, I think I played up with much greater energy than I should have had I lunched before.

	FRANCS. CENTS.	
In hand this morning ..	9	65
Tennis lesson	5	0
Billiard „	5	0
	<hr/>	
	19	65

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
Spent		50 coffee.
		60 cigarettes.
I	75	dinner.
	<hr/>	45 stamps.
	3	30

Leaving in hand 16 francs 35 cents.

A wet, dreary day, which gave me an opportunity of calmly considering my position. **Thirteenth Day: Lille.** Although I cannot but congratulate myself upon my good luck in having met such pleasant and kind fellows as the sportsmen of Lille, who have all treated me with extreme

cordiality, yet I am not earning by any means sufficient money to enable me to win my bet. I must, it is evident, devise some means of getting more money. An idea has come into my head that I might give some kind of performance at the Vélodrome. I have thought of proposing to walk a kilometer, run a kilometer, bicycle a kilometer, and ride a kilometer in fifteen minutes for the lot. (A kilometer is 1093·633 yards.) It would be sufficiently interesting from its variety alone, and I think I am athlete enough to be able to do it. To-morrow I shall see what can be done.

I gave another billiard-lesson to a M. D——x, who takes a keen interest in my bet. Afterwards I returned to the solitude of my hotel. I really don't know what I should have done with the long weary hours, if I had not brought with me two fairly heavy books that will require some time to get through.

My clothes being far from elegant, it seems to me to be all the more creditable on the part of my new acquaintances here to help me as they do. I have only two suits of clothes, and to-day received quite a shock. On examining my flannel trousers I found that there was a hole, an honest hole due to hard wear and not to a tear, and therefore all

the more difficult to mend. I must, however, try to do something to it, or I shall be compelled to beg, borrow, or steal another garment.

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
In hand this morning	16	35
Received for billiard-lesson	5	0
	21	35

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
Spent I	75	lunch.
	15	English paper.
I	75	dinner.
	60	cigarettes.
	80	stamps.
	5	5

Leaving in hand 16 francs 30 cents.

Oh, the loss of the morning tub! There is **Fourteenth** nothing to make up for it. I should **Day: Lille.** infinitely prefer going without my breakfast to going without my cold-water bath in the morning. But the latter costs one franc and a-half, while the former comes to a good deal less, so that I have to content myself with a sponge all over in a way that only makes me wish for the real thing all the more. However, it is no good repining over such small details as this when the greater question of how on

earth I am to pay my hotel bill presents itself every minute to my thoughts. I have this evening in hand 11 francs, and with that I have to-morrow to pay my breakfast and bed for seven days, as well as sundry dinners and luncheons extra for which I could not pay ready money, and therefore was obliged to take in the *salle-à-manger* and have placed to my account. I dare say when I have finished the trip I shall laugh heartily at all my present anxieties, but they are serious enough to me just now, and I feel like a criminal when I pass the proprietor chinking my few *sous* in my pocket to make him think I am a *richard*.

I went out this morning to try and see M——e about my proposal for a performance at the Vélo-drome. I could not find him, so gravitated to my old lair, the public gardens. Indeed Lille is the most blessed of towns in the extent of public spaces. A fellow-idler accosted me with a cry of distress. "Look here, my friend," said I, showing him my eleven francs, "that is all the money I have in the world, and with it I must pay my hotel bill for a week. Nevertheless here are ten centimes for you, for which you ought to be more than grateful." He muttered his thanks and

moved off, not altogether understanding my strange behaviour.

I went to the extravagance of buying an English newspaper at the station in order to make up intellectually—poor food, perhaps—for my physical hunger, for to-day I again went without dinner.

In hand in the morning 16 francs 30 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	2	30	luncheon and coffee.
		25	newspaper.
	2	15	washing.
		50	stamps.
		10	beggar.
	5	30	

Leaving 11 francs in hand.

I woke up after a night of pleasant dreams to **Fifteenth** the discomforts of a nasty, wet and **Day: Lille.** dirty day. Tried to see the Director of the Vélodrome, but failed. In the afternoon D——e came to see me, and we talked over my idea. He thinks the best plan would be to get the Directors to give a “turn” in the races next Wednesday, and to pay me a certain sum. M——t also called, and agreed that this would be my best plan. I accompanied the former to

M. C——e, the Director of the Vélodrome. He promised to place the matter before his colleagues, and to-morrow I am to have an answer.



A NIGHT OF PLEASANT DREAMS.

I spent nearly the whole evening patching up my trousers. I have made a fair job of it, but it can be seen that it was not done by the hand of an expert. I thought it strange that I had no bill presented me to-day. I suppose the blow will fall to-morrow. No dinner to-day.

In hand this morning 11 francs.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent 1	50 lunch.
	50 stamps.
	50 tobacco.
<hr/>	
2	50

Leaving 8 francs 50 cents.

I have a very good mind to throw up my bet, **Sixteenth** telegraph to England for money, and **Day: Lille.** simply confess myself beaten. The events of this morning have been almost too much for me. Here is the true and veracious account of them:—The waiter on bringing me my hot water presented me at the same time with my bill, the amount of which was 43 francs 75 cents. Although I was in bed, he seemed to expect me to get up and settle it at once. I told him to leave it, which he did with a certain amount of reluctance. I had arranged yesterday with M——t to go down to the Vélo-drome and practise my kilometers, so having breakfasted in my room, I packed my little bag with a flannel shirt and a pair of tennis-shoes and went out. As I passed the landlord's room he bounced out, looking very red and angry.

and shouted, "I cannot allow you to leave my hotel without paying your bill, and with part of your luggage." This was simply awful. I don't think I ever felt so miserable in all my life. At first I was furiously angry, but kept myself well in hand, and explained very politely what was in



THE WAITER PRESENTED ME WITH MY BILL.

my bag, opening it to show him the innocent tennis-shoes and flannels. Still he persisted, so I simply dumped down the thing on the floor in a passion and left him, telling him that I would pay and leave. This, however, was easier said than done. Luckily I had an appointment with M——t at the Vélodrome, and there I wended my



"I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO LEAVE MY HOTEL WITHOUT
PAYING YOUR BILL."

way, feeling inclined, as the phrase is, to "chuck the whole thing up."

Arrived at the Vélodrome I told M——t the whole story, not concealing from him that I was ready to give in and throw up the sponge. His kindness I shall not easily forget. He cheered me up wonderfully by telling me that I must expect such little *désagréments* in such an enterprise as mine, and that he would come with me and soothe the savage landlord. In the mean time I determined to practise my performance. I was able to do my three kilometers, one walking, one running, and one on a bicycle, just within twelve minutes, leaving three minutes for the kilometer on horseback, which is ample.

I felt quite a new man after the little burst of exercise and the cold douche that followed it. My future seemed clearer, and in consequence my heart was lighter, as I left the Vélodrome, having made an arrangement with M——t to earn five francs by helping him to decorate a tricycle for the torchlight cycle procession, which is announced for this evening.

In the mean time, as economy was still to be studied, I lunched on a glass of beer, and afterwards went to work at the decoration of a huge

tricycle, which we turned out in guise of a boat. Owing to my having run hard in the morning and lunched on nothing, I began to feel rather faint towards the end of the afternoon, so I hastened off to a small restaurant where I dined for a shilling. The *menu* is worthy of record, considering the price of the meal—a nice soup, blanquette de veau, beefsteak with potatoes, cheese (Roquefort), bread-and-butter, and about a pint of beer!

Refreshed considerably by this, I returned to see the procession. There were about a dozen cycles, all gaily decorated with Chinese lanterns. It was decidedly a pretty and successful exhibition of French taste for artistic effect.

All the time, however, my mind was dwelling on the state of things at my hotel, and the picture of a hard landlord presented itself every moment to me. At last M——t was free to accompany me. When the reason of my presence was explained, and a guarantee given by my kind friend that he would be responsible for me, the landlord made no objection to my staying. If I had the money I should certainly leave the place, for after my little episode of the morning I feel very uncomfortable here.

	FRANCS. CENTS.	
In hand this morning	8	50
Received for decorating tricycle	5	0
	13	50

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	10 postcard.
	50 two beers.
I	35 dinner.
	30 cigarettes.
	5 matches.
	<hr/>
2	30

Leaving in hand 11 francs 20 cents.

Passed most of the morning making arrangements for my performance. The **Seventeenth Day: Lille.** director of the Vélodrome told me that it would be difficult now that the notices and advertisements are out to give me a "turn" on Wednesday, but suggested my having next Sunday afternoon all to myself. The programme proposed is as follows:—I am to do first of all my four kilometers in fifteen minutes, and then afterwards to ride twenty kilometers (twelve and a half miles) against a cyclist. I am to have two horses, and change four times, so as to give each a little breathing time. The thing ought to

succeed, for it is new, and there is variety enough to satisfy the most exacting of publics.

Passing the boathouse of the *Sport Nautique de Lille*, the leading rowing-club of the place, I was hailed by a St. Omer acquaintance, who had shown himself particularly interested in my enterprise. He informed me that he was a member of the club, and introduced me in the heartiest manner, and asked me to come to the boathouse in the afternoon and see whether some means could be devised of giving me the opportunity of earning a little money. I agreed with many thanks to the proposal, and sauntered in the park till the hour agreed on. The delight of again being in the way of earning a few francs made up somewhat for the absence of lunch. Seated on a bench in one of the many shady walks, I was plunged in a pleasant reverie, in which I saw myself successful, and arriving in London with my £2 in hand, returning the jeers of those who had prophesied evil of me, when I was interrupted by some one asking in a sweet low voice, "Would Monsieur kindly move his legs off the bench?"

I looked up, and seeing a very smart, rosy-cheeked young woman, immediately removed my

knickerbockered legs from off the seat. The reward was a sweet glance and a softly-uttered "*merci*." Mademoiselle, my neighbour, was evidently absorbed in the study of the specimen of a new *genus*, the Englishman. Whether she thought that I was a pseudo-Briton, because I did not conform to the French caricaturist's portrait of the regulation Englishman with a pair of long favourites and a pith helmet, or whether she was *tout bonnement* desirous of entering into conversation with me, I do not know, but her first observation was a positive one to the effect that "Monsieur is not an Englishman."

Though perhaps the positive nature of her remark did not require an answer, yet my regard for truth obliged me to correct her by telling her that in spite of my want of helmet, favourites, and my Belgian accent, yet I was a citizen of perfidious Albion.

A long silence intervened. Mademoiselle looked at my calves with a steady searching regard which was embarrassing to a shy man. At last she lifted her eyes to mine—they were dark and big—and said with a frankness which made me almost blush—

"Monsieur, you have beautiful calves."

“Mademoiselle,” I said, “you do me honour. I am indeed delighted that my calves are admired. It is the first time that I have been told with such charming frankness that they are fine, but your praise will, I am afraid, make me conceited.”

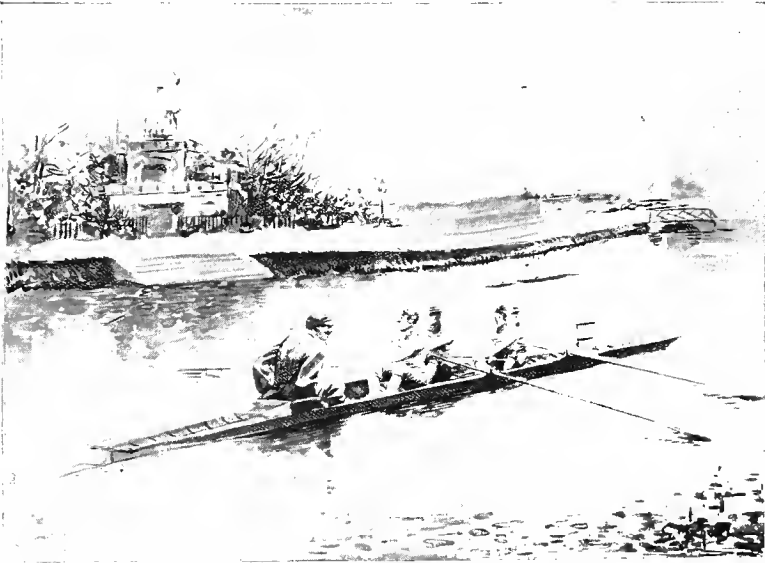
Again she raised her eyes to mine, and again she spoke.

“Monsieur,” she said, “I can honestly say that I admire your calves immensely, but at the same time I may perhaps lessen your conceit by saying that I think them the finest part of you.”

I could not help laughing at this somewhat free remark, and she joined in the mirth with heartiness. We continued our conversation for some time, and at last I took my leave with reluctance to keep my appointment at the *Sport Nautique*. She promised to come and see my performance on Sunday, and hoped that then I should not wear any stockings at all like the rest of the racers, “for,” said she, “I don’t mind confessing that I am quite taken by your fine calves.”

I arrived at the boathouse and found my friends of the morning assembled. I soon got to work, and coached a four-oared galley, steering myself. They were a scratch crew, and it would not be fair to criticize them too much, but there was very

good material. Afterwards I went out and coached a young member in a tub, and did my best to give him some style. I saw, too, the oarsman whom the club is sending to represent them at the regatta at Cambrai. He moved regularly and easily, and



I COACHED A FOUR-OARED GALLEY.

gave me the impression of being a powerful sculler.

On entering the boathouse I soon had around me a number of members, to whom I related the chief incidents of my bet. They were very interested in all that I told them, and uttered numerous

wishes for my success. They seemed to thoroughly enter into the spirit of my undertaking, and understood its difficulties. They presented me with eight francs as payment for the coaching I had done. Altogether they were charming fellows, and I shall have a very pleasant souvenir of the *Sport Nautique de Lille*.

My dinner was modest to-night, but I could not stand the loneliness of the long evening, so I went to the extravagance of a glass of beer in a *café*, and for the few centimes I expended I read every newspaper in the place and got through two hours.

The waiters, however, regarded me with no great favour, and one of them described me to a *confrère* as a "pauvre diable."

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
In hand this morning	11	20
Pay for coaching ...	8	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	19	20

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
Spent 1	35	dinner.
1	35	letters and stamps.
	45	beer.
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	3	15

Leaving 16 francs 5 cents in hand.

Up early and immediately went to see about **Eighteenth** arrangements for Sunday. Everybody **Day: Lille.** seems to go out of their way to show me kindness, and it is only by pleading my need for keeping in training that I can get out of the numerous invitations to take *apéritifs*. I practised at the Vélodrome, and did my kilometer walking in five minutes thirty-five seconds, and running in three minutes thirty seconds, leaving nearly six minutes for the bicycle and horse. My lunch to-day was cheap, but not nasty. I paid seventy centimes for a meal, which included a glass of beer, unlimited bread, stewed rabbit, and vegetables.

According to the present arrangements I am to look after the hiring of the horses, or rather I am to find them, but the Vélodrome director pays for them. I went the round of the chief livery stables here, but could find nothing. A horse-dealer I met assured me that I should have to go to Ghent to find what I wanted. I was, however, informed by another that to-morrow I shall in all probability get a couple of horses at the fair.

The financial arrangements I have made with the directors of the Vélodrome are that they pay my hotel bill and give me something to carry me on to the next town I wish to try—an arrangement

which resembles somewhat the gift to the German band to play in the next street.

Again I spent a good hour over the mending of my trousers. A good honest rent I can manage, but when it comes to mending a worn-out garment, I find it very difficult. I am beginning to understand the intricacies of darning. My task to-night was to darn a big thread-bare piece. I used white thread, and when I looked upon my handiwork I found it was all brilliantly white, while the rest of the garment was grey. However, by rubbing it on the rather dusty floor I reduced the glare of the white to a somewhat sober hue. I never before so much appreciated the maxim that "necessity is the mother of invention," as when I found myself on my knees rubbing the white darn down to a less brilliant tint.

In hand this morning, 16 francs 5 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	70 lunch.
	40 stamps.
	30 coffee.
	60 tobacco.
	30 beer.
	<hr/>
	2 30

Leaving 13 francs 75 cents in hand.

I was up in good time to get about the business **Nineteenth** of hiring horses for Sunday. From **Day: Lille.** what I have seen of the "horsey" tribe here, the Vélodrome and all that concerns cycling is in very bad odour, and I shall, in all likelihood, have no small difficulty in getting my mounts. M——t told me that he had seen five or six of the chief jobmasters here—it seems that they meet at a *café*, and have a table set apart for them, to prove that the old adage "two of a trade never agree" does not always hold good—and they told him that there would be no difficulty about finding the horses necessary. But as indefinite promises of that kind are no good to me, I decided to go and interview these gentlemen myself. *À l'heure de l'apéritif*—about noon—I found them together, and, in answer to my inquiries, were wonderfully unanimous in the opinion that I should not succeed in my quest. Politely thanking them, I left and made my way to the horse-market, which is held in a square, some distance from the centre of the town. There I met my dealer of yesterday, and entered into conversation. By dint of using an oily tongue, I persuaded him that it would doubtless be to his interest to help me to find a couple of decent

horses. He seemed rather unwilling, but at last blarney won the day, and I got his promise to see what he could do. By this time the rumour got abroad that I was an English Army Remount Agent. In a moment every man who had a horse at the fair unfastened it, and I was surrounded by a dense circle of rearing, plunging animals, that made me fear for my safety. The risk of being run over or kicked to death by these unruly beasts, or dashed against the railings by their riders, was no small one, and I was unfeignedly thankful when my vociferations, to the effect that I was not what they took me for, had the effect of clearing the square.

The dealer then took me round the square to look at the different animals. Among a good many raw-boned, skinny, and lame horses there was one which struck me as being strong, and looking as though it had speed. Certainly it was not a big beast, but it was clean about the legs, and had a nice intelligent head. The owner wished to sell, and my dealer was very anxious to buy, but they could not come to an agreement. I was surprised to hear the offers made in "pistoles," which is one of the few remaining traces of the ancient Spanish occupation. A

pis'ole is equivalent to ten francs, and I am told that only horsedealers use this manner of counting. The bargaining between the two men did not seem to advance, so an adjournment was made to an *auberge*, whither we were followed by a whole crowd of unshaven, bloused, straw-chewing dealers. It was amusing to watch the progress of the negotiation. I had already taken my agent on one side, and told him that the cob pleased me, and that he might try to come to some agreement for Sunday, on condition that I should give the animal a fair trial beforehand. Whereupon he commenced thus—

“That is not a bad beast of yours, but I am afraid he looks better than he is.”

“Not at all; if anything, it's the contrary. For all kinds of work he is a regular nailer.”

“But anybody can see that he's got no staying power, and would never do for long distances.”

“Why, that's his very best point. I have seen him do his twenty kilometers in the hour with a heavy weight behind him.”

“Well, he doesn't look like it. I dare say he's good for a kilometer, but——”

“*Mon cher ami*,” burst out the owner, now quite excited, “he is known throughout the whole district for his wonderful staying powers.”

“Bah! I wouldn’t mind betting he’d be hanging his tongue out at the end of three kilometers, and at the end of four you’d have to wheel him home in a cart.”

“But try him and see! Here! Now!” shouted the man. “Here, Jules, harness the cob to the cart. Now you’ll see what he is worth.”

“That’s just what I want to see. Here is an English gentleman who knows something about a horse. Let him come too,” and thereupon he made a long oration on my merits as a judge of a horse’s points, and I noticed that the spectators began to look upon me with a new interest.

We soon had the cob in harness, and the owner, the dealer, and myself got into a kind of dogcart to which he was attached. As soon as we turned into the main street, swish! went the whip, and we started off at full gallop. The little beast covered the ground at a splendid speed. Gradually my two companions got more excited, and used the whip to an alarming extent. My situation was far from agreeable, rushing along the street of a populous town at this headlong pace, and I advised the driver to pull up, for we were nearing a cross-road, and there was no small danger of running into and smashing anything that might come in our way.

My companions, too, seemed to think it was time to reduce speed, and the dealer began to pull hard at the reins, when all at once the near one broke, and we were left without the means of stopping the cob, which was now thoroughly heated and going at top speed. I held tight and looked forward to a thorough smash-up against something, but luckily the cob yielded to the vigorous pulling on the remaining rein and gradually eased up, though not without having come very near being upset on the pavement. We tied up the broken rein, and went back to the dealer's stables at a good pace. In addition to my fear of an accident, I was all the time afraid of experiencing that French legal operation which is called *dresser un procès-verbal*. I have often wished to see a *procès-verbal*. I always think that the French must be a very law-abiding race to be kept in bounds by this mysterious *procès-verbal*. I read constantly in the newspapers paragraphs like this—"Le sieur X. has broken one of the municipal regulations, and in consequence *procès-verbal a été dressé*." Or again—" *Procès-verbal a été dressé* against Y—— for furious driving." When I get hold of a *procès-verbal* I shall keep it as religiously as a ninth-century manuscript, and shall exhibit

it as having even more effect in France than the policeman's right hand on London cabbies.

The cob had now proved that the owner had not altogether exaggerated his good qualities, for we had covered very nearly two miles at this furious rate, and accordingly I instructed the dealer to enter into negotiations with the owner for Sunday, and to tell him what I expected of the animal—ten kilometers at a canter, five at a time. After a long conference, during which the gestures of the two men were amusingly dramatic, I was informed that the owner had no objection to allow his horse to run. Whereupon I ordered him to be saddled, at the same time inquiring whether the beast had ever been ridden.

“I do not know,” said the man. “I have not had the horse for a long time, and I have never ridden him.”

I did not much like the idea of riding a horse which may or may not have been ridden before, especially as the only place to make the trial was the cobbled main street, but as there was no other way of finding out except by getting on his back, I mounted him in the yard, and rode out into the street. On the pavement, the little cob proved that he had a decided opinion of his own as to

where he wished to go, and, as I was decided to go in the opposite direction, the result was a struggle which ended in both the horse and myself coming to the ground in a heap. Neither of us, luckily, was hurt, so I got on him again, and this time brought him to his senses. He had a nice easy free canter, and I came to the conclusion that he would do for my purpose.

This question being settled, there still remained the second horse to find. After a good deal of inquiring, we found a cabman who told us that he had "just the very thing." We ordered him round, and I saddled and mounted the animal, which stood about sixteen hands high, and might be described as having plenty of "timber." I cantered him on the boulevard, feeling, I must confess, somewhat of a *sontag-ritter*, but, for my needs, I was bound to canter and canter on the only possible place, which was the boulevard. My mount proved to be a little stiff, but he soon warmed to his work, and cantered along fairly well, so I got the dealer to negotiate the hiring of it for Sunday. The two men went through the same ceremony, both indulging in extravagant gestures, but at last came to an agreement. I promised both the owners to give them an answer as soon as I could,

and took my departure, well satisfied with my day's work.

In the afternoon I was informed that my adversary in the twenty kilometer race is to be a lady, Mademoiselle Dutrieu, and I was introduced to her at the offices of the Vélodrome. She is, it seems, a most accomplished cyclist, and has done no less than twenty-one miles in the hour.

I was surprised to find the Département du Nord, of which Lille is the capital, has two Balloon Societies, each of which makes ascent at regular intervals. There is some idea of inflating a balloon at the Vélodrome on Sunday—which will not, I hope to goodness, have the effect of frightening the horses.

A peculiar announcement met my eyes to-day over a shop. It was "*Spécialité de cercueils. Entrée Libre*"—Speciality in coffins. Entrance Free. The shop was stocked with all kinds of coffins, and there was a considerable crowd before the window. It is extraordinary how morbid we are, all of us. I have noticed in every country I have visited, that the undertaker, the sexton, and the hangman are always sure of having an attentive audience whenever they deign to say anything. As for undertakers, their manner of speech is something

extraordinary. To them the corpse is the great centre round which they themselves and the relatives and friends revolve. Not long ago at a funeral, a friend of the deceased was thus addressed by the undertaker—"Please, sir, will you come this way? The corpse's brother wishes to speak to you."

There are a good many disagreeable things in my daily life, which, of course, are only to be expected from the nature of my enterprise. I do not mind about restraining myself in the matter of food, but when I am economizing every halfpenny, I must say I begrudge giving three pence for a glass of beer. The reason why I take beer at all is that everybody makes appointments at the *café*, and, as everybody is not so punctual as I am, it frequently happens that I arrive some time before the other. I cannot very well sit in a *café* without drinking something, and as beer is about the cheapest drink, I order that, but feel all the time that the expense is excessive, considering the state of my purse.

The Director of the Vélodrome came with me to-day to my hotel, and assured the landlord that the amount of my bill would be settled by the Company, so that now I feel quite bold, and have

no more fear of being asked to "settle that little bill."

No dinner to-day.

In hand this morning, 13 francs 75 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.	
Spent	1 65 luncheon.
	30 beer.
	<hr/>
	1 95

Leaving in hand 11 francs 80 cents.

The weather to-day was very fair, and the sun **Twentieth** showed himself for the first time for **Day: Lille.** some days. I wended my way down to the Vélodrome to do some training, and found a goodly number of cyclists assembled there, the reason being that to-day (Assumption Day) is a holiday. I was received, as I have invariably been, with great kindness, and of course my bet and its consequent adventures formed the subject of our conversation. Everybody showed the keenest interest in my coming performance, and expressed themselves very eager to see me walk. I did a few paces to show them the English style of fast walking. One of them asserted that the body was not given fair play, and that it would be easier to cover the ground more

rapidly by walking with a freer gait. I explained that for fair toe-and-heel work it was almost impossible to hold oneself otherwise, and that if one tried a different attitude there was great risk of breaking into an unconscious trot. He was still of a different opinion, and backed it by proposing to do a lap on his own principle, declaring that he could beat me. He accordingly started, but could not help breaking into a most distinct and rapid trot. He covered the distance in one minute fifty-eight seconds. I followed suit *à l'Anglaise*, and beat him badly in spite of his running, doing it in one minute fifty seconds.

Afterwards I did the kilometer walking, running, and bicycling—doing the whole three in eleven minutes forty-five seconds, leaving four minutes fifteen seconds for the horse. This time I changed the order and walked first, then rode the bicycle, and then ran, but I find this much more fatiguing than the other order, viz.—walk, run, and then bicycle. There is infinitely more change of exercise between walking and running, than between walking and bicycling—at least I find it so. Therefore on Sunday I shall walk, run, bicycle, and ride, and so keep to my old order.

After a good rub down and a splendid douche,

I came back and lunched at the hotel, feeling very fit. I am very much of opinion that I must now take what little food I do take as regularly as I can. The Swiss guides' maxim of "eating little and often" is after all the best for real hard work.

I saw in the afternoon at the offices of the Vélodrome a copy of the illustration which forms part of the placard announcing Sunday's meeting. It represents a man on a horse at full gallop, and a lady bicyclist bringing up the rear. The horseman is not supposed, I hope, to be a portrait. In the picture he wears a most imposing imperial on the lower lip—a form of personal adornment which I positively loathe. His hair, too, is flowing like a poet's, and I feel sure that no one will take me for the man "riding in hot haste."

There were races at the Vélodrome in the afternoon, and I attended them, meeting nearly the whole of my Lille acquaintances. The racing was fairly good, but it seems to me that bicycle racing is rather palling on the public. My adversary of Sunday beat the world's lady five-kilometer record by something over two minutes. I am afraid she will make me and my horses look small.

I am beginning to feel what it is to be a lion.

Everybody treats me as one. I am constantly being pointed at, and am introduced all around as "*cet Anglais qui a fait ce pari original.*" There was a rival lion on the field to-day, M. Musin, the violinist. We were introduced to each other, and he was kind enough to give me a ticket for his concert to-night.

On the ground was placarded up the following—

SUNDAY NEXT

THE CELEBRATED ENGLISH HORSEMAN

WILLIAM HOWELL

WILL RIDE A MATCH ON HORSEBACK

OF TWENTY KILOMETERS

AGAINST

M. DUTRIEU THE BICYCLIST.

My *nom de guerre*, "William Howell," was chosen for me by a friend. He told me that it must be William—the French public expect that of an English name—and Howell is easy to pronounce to French tongues, since the "w" is a "v."

After the races I was taken by M. C——e to the military club here, which is a handsome building and well kept. He told me that the waiters were

all soldiers actually doing their service. I can imagine that everything ought to work wonderfully smoothly, when you can give any of the servants a few days in the cells for breaches of rules or want of attention. I gave a billiard lesson on the table at the club, and thereby earned two francs.

I dined at a new restaurant, not very good and a little dear. I enjoyed the concert immensely, and came home with my head in the air to settle down to the task of again mending those awful trousers of mine. Last time I attacked them I repaired them so strongly that it was like putting new wine into old bottles ; the repaired part was so strong that it had torn the old, and I had another good hour's work to arrange it.

Spent 1 franc 60 cents for dinner.

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
In hand this morning	11	80
Billiard lesson	2	0
	13	80

Leaving in hand 12 francs 20 cents.

There can be no doubt that I am getting more **Twenty-first** or less of a celebrity. The advertise-
Day: Lille. ments of the coming performance that are posted up all round the town have a great

deal to do with this. That I am recognized as the Englishman who is going to take the chief part in the affair is evidenced by the fact that as I pass the numerous *cafés* where the greater part of the customers take their *apéritifs* outside on the pavement, I constantly hear one man say to another, "Look there, that is the Englishman who has made that extraordinary bet, and who is giving a performance at the Vélodrome on Sunday." Such is fame! Some men seek it at the cannon's mouth, but I begin to think that in my case it is obtained at the price of being considered rather mad.

Things were all sixes and sevens to-day at the offices of the Vélodrome. The owner of the little cob I had engaged has sent word to say that his wife has decided objections to allowing the horse to run on that day, and threatens, to make sure that her commands are not disobeyed, to lock up the little beast and her husband. A masterful woman that, I should imagine. For me the business is a terrible blow. My performance cannot take place without horses, and horses are not easily found. I at once started off to see my friend the dealer, who could do nothing but confirm the news, and talk in a very disparaging way of a man "*qui n'est pas*

maître chez lui." It was discouraging to think I should have to start once again on my horse-trying rounds, but there was nothing else to be done. A dealer presented himself to me with the usual tale. He had the very thing I wanted, a horse that had done twenty kilometers in half-an-hour, or some such extraordinary time. This same animal is well known, according to the owner, throughout the *Département*. He has won innumerable races, and altogether was an animal such as I could not meet, as he expressed it, "in the streets of London."

"And why, may I ask," said I, "why do you wish to sell it?"

"Oh, I have given up racing, and don't ride or drive any more."

"And how much do you want for this paragon?"

"Forty pistoles" (400 francs).

"And where is the animal now?"

"Out to grass."

"Since when?"

"About six weeks."

"And so you think that a horse is in a fit condition to undertake a severe test of staying power after having been out for six weeks to grass?"

"Well, you see, *mon cher monsieur*," said the

man, laying his hand on my arm, "it is like this. My pasture is well known throughout the countryside for being the finest, and more strengthening than the best oats."

"My friend," I exclaimed, "you have an excellent saying in French. When any one tells you something which may be difficult of belief, you say, 'Believe it, and drink some water afterwards'—to make it digest. That's just what I am going to do, just to try and digest your account of your wonderful horse and your wonderful grass."

He got up and walked away muttering to a friend who was with him, "*celui-là est du métier.*" I have often heard the English saying that one must never believe even one's dearest friend when he wants to borrow money of you or sell you a horse. Certainly horsedealers in France are wonderful in their talent for exaggeration; some of the Lille fraternity do not hesitate at anything in the way of lying when they wish to sell a horse.

But all this time I could find no horse to suit me. I wandered here, there, and everywhere after animals. Sometimes I was shown a good horse, but then his price was prohibitive, and they would not allow him to go out for the day unless some extraordinary guarantee were made. At other

times I was laid hold of by a voluble, gesticulating young fellow, or a discharged groom, or in fact anybody who had a horse or had heard of a horse which could be bought or hired, and shown the most pitiable frameworks of horses that I have ever met with. I decided to have another try at the jobmasters. One of them had two fairly good cobs ; one looked too small for me, but was the best goer. He wanted to sell it for 450 francs, though he undertook to buy it back again for 300 francs. My position is rather awkward. It is impossible for me to buy horses myself, and it is difficult for me to suggest that the administration of the Vélodrome should incur great expense on my behalf, though I firmly believe that my performance will attract a good crowd of people. There was nothing to do but to arrange for a trial of the two cobs, and leave things as they are till to-morrow.

I got down to the Vélodrome to do some training, but the part of the track on which I walk and run was under water, so I come back without having done anything. However, the exercise I have to take in walking all over the town after horse-dealers is almost sufficient for me.

In hand this morning, 12 francs 20 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	o	25 tramway
	I	60 dinner.
	<hr/>	
	I	85

Leaving in hand 10 francs 35 cents.

I shall soon begin to wear very tight trousers, carry a straw in my mouth, and call **Twenty-second Day: Lille.** a horse a "'oss," for I have done nothing the last few days but examine and try horses. The misfortune of yesterday's failure was followed up to-day by the news that the second man, whose horse I had secured, had drawn out of the contract, so that here I am, with only two days before Sunday, unable to get a single horse. I have a shrewd suspicion that the fellow imagines that, now the placards are all out and it is impossible to put off the affair, he might name and get his own price. They will, however, find that they have made a mistake, I imagine. The best thing to be done now is to buy outright the horses we require, and sell them after Sunday's performance. The Director of the Vélodrome, a veterinary surgeon, and myself had a regular horse-hunt all the day long. Mounted on bicycles we sped from one end

of the town to another to find animals. We did not get once on a good scent. On one occasion we rode about six miles over the cobbles to a place in the suburbs, where we were told that a man had a horse for sale which would just suit us. When we arrived there we found that he never had possessed a horse, and was never likely to. At last after nearly killing ourselves we returned to our first love, the jobmasters. One of them—an exception in every way to the rest of the “horsey” fraternity of Lille both in his honesty and straightforwardness as well as in his evident desire to help us over our difficulties—showed us a nice horse which he was willing to sell. I got on his back and galloped a quarter of a mile, and found him fast with a nice pleasant motion. One cannot call him a perfect animal, being rather short in the hind-quarters and a bit too light for a heavy weight, but it would be difficult to find a better for the money. For the work we want him to do, he will suit us admirably. On my recommendation it was decided to buy him, after a trial at the Vélodrome which came off in the evening and gave us perfect satisfaction, so a bargain was struck, and Baccarat now belongs to the Vélodrome Company.

This horse business takes up so much of my

time that I was not able to practise my kilometers to-day, much to the regret of one of the employés at the Vélodrome, who has taken a great fancy to me, and is quite persuaded that were I to attempt to swim the Channel, ride in the Grand Prix, or compete in the international bicycle races, I should be sure of success. He had been for a long time shampooer at the big Turkish bath in Paris, and he is very fond of telling me what numbers of illustrious personages have passed under his hands. To-day he expressed a great predilection for the English. I was conceited enough to think that perhaps his high opinion of my humble efforts had something to do with his good opinion of my compatriots. Expecting a flattering reply, I asked him why he liked us above other foreigners. "Ah!" said he, "Englishmen take more Turkish baths than all the other races put together." This speaks well for our cleanliness, but his answer was disappointing to my self-conceit.

The following notices appeared in the local papers to-day—

The *Echo du Nord* prints—

"HORSE v. BICYCLE.

"All those persons who take an interest in sport have followed with attention, last year, that sensa-

tional race between the horse and the bicycle. As far as I can remember, this epic—and hippic—struggle took place at Buffalo (Paris). Up to now, we at Lille have been obliged to content ourselves with reading newspaper accounts of the race. Thanks to the fortunate initiative of an English sportsman, who is, as well, an amiable *confrère*, we shall be enabled to see such a contest next Sunday at the Vélodrome. M. Howell has arranged a race on horseback against Madlle. Dutrieu on a bicycle for a distance of twenty kilometers. The same cavalier has engaged to walk a kilometer, run a kilometer, do a kilometer on a bicycle, and a kilometer on horseback, the whole within fifteen minutes.

“M. Howell is that wonderful wager-maker (*parieur enragé*) whom we presented to our readers a few days since, and who for the honour of French hospitality has wagered that it would be possible for him to live for six weeks in France simply by utilizing his sporting proclivities. We begin to think that the people of Lille are as hospitable as the Scotch, for it is nearly a fortnight since M. Howell has been with us.—G. DR.” [The initials are those of a very kind friend and a most accomplished journalist.]

The same journal has the following—

“SPORT.

“Next Sunday, the administration of the Vélodrome will present to the public of Lille the English horseman, William Howell.

“In consequence of a challenge, a twenty kilometer match has been arranged between Madlle. Dutrieu and M. Howell, the former on a bicycle, and the latter on horseback.

“A still more original performance will take place the same day. M. Howell has engaged to run a kilometer, etc., etc. Here is a chance for the lovers of betting.”

The *Progrès du Nord* has this—

“CYCLING.

“The famous English horseman, William Howell, is hard at work training every evening at the Vélodrome in view of his performance on Sunday. Many of our fellow-townsmen have made important bets on him, and everybody will be at the Vélodrome on Sunday. The match of twenty kilometers between Madlle. Dutrieu, the world's champion, and M. Howell, is the one absorbing topic of conversation in the town.”

There! If I do not become famous after that,

I shall never certainly be *monstrari digito*. At any rate I must try to deserve the epithet of "famous horseman," and to show the good people of Lille that their kindness to me will have the effect of making me do my best. Indeed my reception in this town has been most flattering, and on all hands have I received evidence of their goodwill. My humble opinion is that the two nations, the French and English, will understand each other better by the medium of sport than by all the newspaper and magazine articles that were ever written.

The following is a copy of the placard that is posted throughout the town to announce Sunday's race—

LILLE VÉLODROME.

GREAT ATTRACTION!!!

1 Kilometer walking. 1 Kilometer on a bicycle.

1 Kilometer running. 1 Kilometer on horseback.

The whole within fifteen minutes by

M. WILLIAM HOWELL.

GREAT TWENTY KILOM. RACE between M. HOWELL on horseback, and MADLLE. DUTRIEU, CHAMPION OF THE WORLD, on a bicycle.

In hand this morning, 10 francs 35 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	I	15 stamps and cakes.
	I	75 luncheon.
		40 beer.
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	3	30

Leaving in hand 7 francs 5 cents.

I have often heard my compatriots complain
Twenty- in no measured terms of the vileness
third Day: of French tobacco. With all my
Lille. admiration for the French, I cannot
speak well of the weed as it is produced here.
Nay, I must acknowledge to have used strong
language myself on the subject. This morning
as I was smoking my after-breakfast cigarette
the truth was suddenly revealed to me by one
of those flashes of thought which one would
imagine to be almost due to a supernatural
agency No longer will I spit and swear when I
taste French tobacco, for I see in its terrible
burning power and its utter brown-paperiness the
deep but benevolent designs of a paternal
Republican Government, "Smoking is injurious,"
so argue the governing authorities. "If we tax it
high it will only make smokers extravagant, and

will not have the effect of stamping out the vile habit. To effect this, let us combine together and supply a tobacco, which, without being absolutely impure, will make smokers writhe and squirm, and ultimately give up the use of the noxious weed." With this benevolent idea, the French Régie are succeeding admirably in their object. A French smoker is in my eyes a man of immense courage and perseverance. When I see one with a cigarette in his mouth, I look upon him as a hero in the cause of the disappearing tribe of the followers of St. Nicotine; but when I see a man puffing away at a pipe filled with French tobacco, he is to me not merely a hero but a martyr, worthy to rank with St. Bartholomew.

It was with a certain amount of weariness of spirit that I set out this morning to go to the Vélodrome. To tell the truth, I am getting rather sick of trying horses. I am not a rough-rider, and have always admired, as infinitely above me in courage, the man who daily throws his leg over skittish and vicious horses, and puts them through their paces. This morning I have to try the two cobs of the horse-dealer I saw yesterday afternoon. They are certainly small, but still perhaps they may be able to carry me. There is, however, one

advantage consequent on yesterday's purchase, and that is, that I have a horse to ride all to myself, and shall have no more long journeys on foot along the dusty streets. Baccarat therefore carried me down to the Vélodrome in the morning. The more I see of him, the more I like him. He has one little failing which is the result of mere playfulness. When you are walking or trotting quietly along the road, he suddenly gives a sort of abortive buck-jump, which may unseat a man who is not on the look-out for these little vagaries.

The two steeds to be tried were awaiting me when I arrived at the Vélodrome, as well as several directors of the Vélodrome Company and the Vet. I got on the bay, and started round the ground at a hard gallop. He was not up to my weight, unfortunately, and certainly did not have the staying power which his owner had asserted was his strong point. He was saddled, too, simply abominably. The girths could not be tightened, being too large altogether, and riding the little beast partook somewhat of the perils of tight-rope walking, in that it was purely a matter of balance. The same state of things was the case with the second animal, but, to add to the insecurity of a wobbling saddle, he was a regular little brute. As soon as I

got on him, he showed that he possessed that most abominable of all equine vices, the desire to break the leg of his rider against a wall or a post, or anything which was handy. I was quiet relieved to hear the Vet. say that it was no use riding him any more, since he was lame. We sent back the horses with a message the opposite of complimentary.

There was nothing more to be done but to go back to the owner of Baccarat and see what he could do for us. After some bargaining he agreed to let us have three of his horses on hire for to-morrow afternoon. As I expected, I had to try about half-a-dozen animals to see which would suit me the best, and cantered round the riding-school until my choice was made. So there the thing is settled, and I never was more relieved in my life, for I certainly expected almost a *fiasco* with regard to horses.

An arrangement had been made for Madlle. Dutrieu, my adversary, to come this morning and do a few laps to accustom both herself and the horses to this new departure. She was, unfortunately, unable to come, so we start to-morrow on absolutely unknown ground. I hope everything will go off all right ; at any rate I will do my best and no man can do more.

I walked, ran, and bicycled my kilometers this evening in very fair time, eleven minutes forty-five seconds ; leaving four minutes fifteen seconds for the horse, so that I have ample time, and therefore no fear as to the success of my first item. A company of cyclists escorted me back to the town after my training, and I was glad to find that Baccarat did not in the least mind them. There was a smoking concert—*soirée bacchique*—to be held to-night at the head-quarters of one of the 'Cycle Clubs, and the president was kind enough to invite me to attend it. I accepted with much willingness, and after dinner arrived just as the proceedings were commencing. Everybody was eager in their desire to show me some politeness, and I enjoyed the evening very much. There was a certain amount of singing, reciting, and music, some by professionals and some by members of the Club. There was a blind local poet who recited some of his own productions. They were for the most part in the local dialect, and therefore not quite comprehensible to me, a stranger, but I understood enough to perceive that they were rather of a "blue" nature.

Some of the recitations were most broad. Altogether, I doubt whether an English audience,

even of young men, would have approved of some of the items sung or recited. One thing I noticed particularly, that everybody was as sober as could be. The affair began at nine o'clock and finished at midnight, and considering that we were all young fellows more or less, and in congenial company, I think it decidedly to their credit that not a single person was in any way rowdy or the worse for drink. Although, as I said before, an English audience of the same kind as this would not probably have listened without expressions of disapproval to some of the broad songs and recitations, yet I am afraid that a good many would have left the room in a state of intoxication.

In hand this morning, 7 francs 5 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	I	25	luncheon.
		25	newspaper.
		<hr/>	
	I	50	

Leaving in hand 5 francs 55 cents.

The weather was very threatening this morning when I got up and went down to the **Twenty-fourth** Vélodrome to see about the arrangements for this afternoon's performance. On my way down I passed more than **Day: Lille.**

one advertisement-cart pulled by a man, and setting forth the attractive character of the programme to be gone through by the "Sportsman Anglais, William Howell." There were other evidences, in the interest taken in me as I passed the masses of Sunday Boulevard walkers, that I am becoming known. All this is rather embarrassing, and I only hope that I shall justify the more or less romantic interest which is attached rather to the man who has made an extraordinary bet than to an athlete and rider who hopes to give the public their money's worth.

The fact, too, that I am advertised as an Englishman makes me all the more anxious to render a good account of myself. But when the epithet "celebrated" is tacked on to my name I have a double reason for anxiety to justify it. I certainly have no right whatever to such an adjective, except that my mad bet has obtained for me here in France a certain amount of renown. I shall therefore count somewhat on the indulgence of the people of Lille, who have, so far, treated me with genuine kindness.

At the Vélodrome I got in for the finish of a hundred-kilometer bicycle race between two local amateurs. The winner had started badly by being

1

sick twice, but had continued notwithstanding, and ultimately won by seven or eight kilometers. Everybody wished me success, and promised to come down and help me with a cheer. They tell me that there will certainly be a big crowd, for the programme is an original one for Lille. There was a long discussion going on about the disqualification which has been pronounced against the track by the *Union Vélocipédique Française*. It seems that at a meeting some time ago the *pari mutuel* was allowed on the ground, and in consequence a decree was published by the Union disqualifying the Lille track for a month, and every cyclist who raced on it for six weeks. It seems to have been rather an arbitrary measure, and has greatly incensed the cyclists of the Département du Nord, who threaten to set up a Union of their own.

I return to my hotel early for luncheon, in order to give myself plenty of time for digestion before running. All the waiters by this time know who I am, and take the very keenest interest in me. The particular one who looks after my table was most anxious about my diet, and recommended all sorts of good things as being excellent *pour les coureurs*. I ate simply, and after a cigarette went down to the livery stables and mounted Baccarat. It is

wonderful how soon the horse has got used to me. Whenever I enter his stable he always turns his head round in expectation, I suppose, of the usual lump of sugar. Two grooms with three horses formed my train as I entered the Vélodrome, and I was delighted to find that none of the animals took the slightest notice of the balloon which was by this time nearly full of gas.

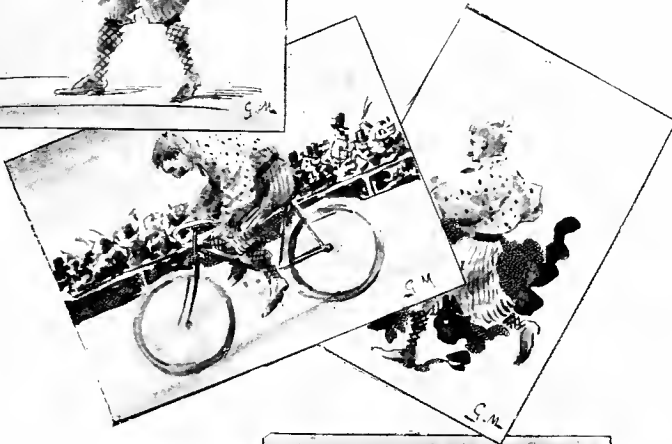
Already, although it was a good hour before the advertised time, there was a fair sprinkling of people, and as the time approached it was evident that there was going to be a big gate. The Grand Stand was filled in a short time, and I noticed that there was quite a number of ladies. Soon after three the official starter and timekeepers came on the ground, and everything was ready for the commencement of my "one-man" show. Getting into my running things I was soon prepared, and had everything arranged so that the bicycle should be held in readiness for me at the end of the second kilometer, and the horse, properly girthed and bitted, waiting for me at the end of the third. People by this time came streaming in, and it was computed that there were over two thousand spectators on the ground—an extraordinary big house for the Vélodrome. This fact was particularly

pleasing to me, because it assured the Company a fair return for the risk they had taken upon themselves in giving me—an unknown and untried performer—an opportunity of earning my living.

I must confess to a feeling of nervousness when everything was ready. My former experiences in life had never before afforded me the excitement of doing anything before a big crowd, but when the pistol was fired to start me, all sensations of that kind disappeared, and my only idea was to do a good record. My first kilometer was done at a walk—fair toe-and-heel work, with the peculiar stride of pedestrian racers. The mob was much amused at it, and seemed to expect something quite different in my style. However, my pace-maker, who at first attempted to do his work at a walk, was obliged to break into a trot, to the huge delight of the public, who showed it by applauding right heartily. I felt that I was doing it in very good time, and my training had just been sufficient not to make me stale, for when I broke into a run at the second kilometer, I felt as fresh as when I started. I was again paced by two friends, and got along at a good pace. For the last hundred and twenty yards I put on a regular spurt, going as hard as ever I could—an effort which was appreci-

ated by the occupants of the Grand Stand, who

broke out into enthusiastic cheering. The bicycle was held in readiness for me at the end of this, and I mounted it and was off



again in very quick time. I have no pretensions to be a record breaker on a bicycle, and although I put my whole force into it, I felt that the pace



THE FOUR-KILOMETER RECORD

was not anything extraordinary. There is, too, a

difficulty about changing from the bicycle to a horse. It is impossible to jump off a machine when going at full speed, and one loses a good deal of time in lessening the pace in order to leave the pedals for the saddle. This I was able to do with as little a loss as possible, and once on the horse I felt that there was no further need for great exertion, and it was simply a matter of my horse's strength—not mine. I must say this for my steed, that he galloped around in rare good style, and towards the end of the kilometer required but little pressure to do a very good spurt. As I finished at a regular racing pace past the Grand Stand there was a round of cheering and clapping of hands which were grateful to me in that they betokened the satisfaction of the public.

The performance being finished I cantered gently round the ground, as is the custom here, and on every side received marks of favour—one enthusiastic Briton shouting out as I passed, "Bully for Old England!"

My delight was great when I was informed by the timekeeper that I had done my four kilometers in twelve minutes twenty-five and a half seconds; and on the announcement of the fact being made to the public on the board, there was another series

of applause, accompanied by cries of "*Bravo, l'Anglais!*"

The officials of the course, thinking that I ought to take a little rest before beginning my twenty-kilometer race, very kindly arranged a bicycle race on the spur of the moment. As, during this time, I was being rubbed down and anointed with embrocation, and was changing my clothes, I did not see it, but heard that it was an exciting finish. Arrayed in a white canvas shirt, ordinary knickerbockers and boots, I rode on to the course, mounted on Baccarat, and was greeted everywhere by the public in the most encouraging manner. I was provided with a whip, but did not wear spurs, because I was afraid that during the many changing of horses that I should have to make I should probably catch them in some part of the gear and fall. My idea, too, was not to force my pace, but to get an uniform speed out of my horses rather by giving them frequent opportunities of rest than by using the whip.

Cheering and clapping of hands announced that my adversary was ready. She appeared very tastefully dressed, and riding a light racing machine. She trundled quietly once round the course, and as she came to the starting-point the

flag fell, and we began our race in right earnest. The cyclist was being paced by two riders on a tandem, while I, of course, was alone. I got my beast into a steady canter, and then held him in for some time. The course at the Vélodrome is in the form of an ellipse, and the two end curves are very short and very nasty for a horse going at any great speed. It is necessary to lean over considerably towards the centre of the ground while passing them, and to do this at a very high speed is not agreeable. However, all went well for some time. As I was getting towards the moment when I was to change horses, I got my beast into a spurt. For some time he answered my heels and whip very well, and was galloping at a good speed, when on coming round to where the three other horses were standing awaiting their turn he suddenly swerved right off on to the sward. As I was riding with very little knee and almost standing in the stirrups, the natural consequence of this was that we parted company. I fell on to the grass luckily, and so did not hurt myself, but at once mounted the second horse, who started off almost before I was in the saddle, obliging me to get my foot into the off stirrup while he was cantering along the sharp curve. All went well for some time, but

again the same thing happened with my mount. This time the brute, instead of bolting on to the middle of the ground—a little vagary for which I



THE HORSE SUDDENLY SWERVED.

was more or less prepared—turned on to the asphalt, and brought me to the ground on its hard surface. This time the fall was more painful, and I felt almost dazed. Indeed for the rest of the

afternoon I only had a kind of drunken recollection of what took place. I can remember mounting fresh horses and going off at a rousing canter, and I can call to mind nearly running down my adversary owing to my horse suddenly rushing on to the cycle track, but my remembrance of the events of the afternoon are rather dim. I am told that I fell about five times, and that in a short time the public, understanding what sort of animals I had to deal with, and admiring my "pluck" as they were pleased to call it, encouraged me by almost maniacal shouts of applause. I know that I had, in a dazed kind of way, made up my mind to go on with the race until I had broken either my neck or a limb—that, I argued in an incoherent kind of way, was due to the Company who had done so much for me. This determination on my part was soon evident to the public, for they cheered and shouted and clapped their hands and yelled in a way which, I was assured, was absolutely unknown before in Lille. I suppose that the sight of a capless form, a face covered with dust and perspiration and a little blood, a white shirt patched with huge splashes of mud and dirt, aroused their enthusiasm. I saw no longer my adversary, but kept on riding for dear

life. As I flashed past the Grand Stand cheering burst forth and was taken up all along the dense line of spectators. I was dead beat and almost unable to hold to the saddle, but felt that I had to continue. Once my beast coming round one of the curves at full speed stumbled and fell on one knee, throwing me nearly on to his neck and making me lose a stirrup. He picked himself up and I recovered the iron, as I was passing the Grand Stand. The spectators assembled there evidently noticed this, for there was another enthusiastic chorus of "*Bravo, l'Anglais !*" "*Allez toujours !*" etc. Here and there among the on-lookers were sprinkled a few of my compatriots, and even my dazed ears caught the familiar accent and heard with pleasure the shout of "Go it, my boy !" "You're a rare plucked 'un, you are !"

At last somebody shouted as I passed the time-keeper's box—"This is the last lap," and I don't think I ever was more relieved in my life. I certainly expected to break some of my bones if not my neck, and the assembled people evidently understood my risk by their enthusiastically expressed admiration at my determination to keep on at it. I was well aware that I had not the slightest chance of winning my race, but it would

have been a very tame affair had I given up after my second fall, and I dare say that the rowdies would have vented their disappointment on the stand and seats.

I slowed up after passing the winning-post and waited for Madlle. Dutrieu to come up, in order to go round the ground once and show ourselves, since the public seemed to require it. She caught me up close to where the "gallery" part of the spectators were assembled, and I shouted out to her, "*Je vous félicite, Mademoiselle.*" This seemed to strike the onlookers as the height of magnanimity, and they simply roared out their approbation. When we arrived before the Grand Stand, too, there was another outburst, to which I responded by bowing as well as my already stiff back would allow me.

Nothing would satisfy the directors but that Madlle. Dutrieu the winner, and I the beaten, should drink each other's health in public in the best champagne on the ground, and it was done to the accompaniment of the shouts and cheers of the spectators.

My work was now over, and never in all my existence have I been so glad to get to the end of anything as I was to finish that race. I have had

some experiences in my life rather out of the ordinary, but certainly this seemed to me to have been fraught with the greatest danger. Indeed it was not until I had stripped in the dressing-room and thoroughly examined myself, that I could be convinced that I had not broken a bone or dislocated some joints. I could feel by the rapid way all my muscles were stiffening that to-morrow I shall in all probability be black-and-blue all over.

Not satisfied with the encouraging cheers they had given vent to while I was racing, a great crowd of spectators invaded the precincts of the pavilion where I was changing, and would not be satisfied until they were assured that I had received no damage. They lingered, therefore, until I appeared, when they made a lane for me to pass through, and expressed their feelings by cries of "*Vive l'Anglais!*" one gentleman adding, "*Vive le Bouledog!*" Nor was this the only ordeal I had to pass through, for on entering on the ground I was taken by one of my friends and introduced to a group of seven or eight ladies who wished to express their high opinion of my *énergie, courage, et persévérance*—a compliment which I hope I received with becoming modesty.

My friend B——t, who all along had been most

solicitous on my behalf and very anxious to learn whether I had received any serious hurt, took me to the Club-house of the *Sport Nautique*, where the victory of their champion at the Cambrai regatta was being celebrated by bumpers of champagne and hilarious dancing. On entering the room, I found about a dozen members engaged, each in his own particular way, in giving the rest of the room the benefit of his ideas on step-dancing. It was difficult not to join in the laughter of the revellers, and still more so for me who look upon the members of the *Sport Nautique* as friends, and their *locale* as a second home. Indeed they transferred their congratulations from their champion to me, and we pledged each other in foaming champagne. I have seldom met with such kind-hearted, jovial, and genial sportsmen as the members of the *Sport Nautique* of Lille, and I can heartily wish that their Club may flourish, and that they themselves may be as happy and successful as they deserve.

My walk home partook somewhat of the nature of a triumphal march. Everywhere I was recognized as the hero of the Vélodrome performance. Along the Boulevard, people continually turned round or stopped to look at me, and one enthusi-

astic Frenchman actually patted me on the shoulder with an approving "*Bravo, l'Anglais!*" At the hotel, too, the whole of the *personnel* had already had an account—perhaps somewhat exaggerated—of my doings, and I found myself regarded quite in the light of a celebrity. The waiter who attended to my wants insisted on my having a bottle of good red wine, for, said he, "*Après cette affaire de l'après-midi, il faut quelque chose de bien bon. Je vous assure, monsieur, que deux fois au moins je vous croyais mort et j'étais bien content de vous voir debout.*"

After dinner I wrote some pressing letters, and on returning from the post, met a friend who is the proprietor of the big riding-school here. He stopped me in the street and said, "Monsieur, I never saw anything like to-day's performance. I have seen flat races and steeplechases, but I assure you that I would not have gone through what you did this afternoon—no, not if they offered me a hundred thousand francs. When I see a brave man, I salute him," and he most politely raised his hat, although I assured him that I was so dazed that my persistence ought not to be put down to pluck but to the obstinacy of a semi-stunned man.

My stiffness is increasing every hour, and I fear

that to-morrow I shall be somewhat like a poker ; but I do not think I have done myself any serious damage.

In hand this morning, 5 francs 55 cents.

FRANCS, CENTS.	
Spent	I 75 luncheon.
	30 tramway.
	75 stamps.
	50 cigarettes.
<hr/>	
	3 30

Leaving 2 francs 25 cents in hand.

When I attempted to leave my bed this morning I found myself in a state of stiffness
Twenty-fifth Day: that was almost painful. My body
Lille. was covered, especially near the shoulders, with the expected black-and-blue tints. My progress down-stairs could hardly be called a walk, it was a most undignified and laughter-provoking waddle. I had promised to meet my kind friend B——t at his office, and talk over yesterday's incidents. I soon found that to appear before two thousand spectators means that you must make up your mind to some of the disagreeables of fame. Passing the different *cafés* on the Grande Place and the Rue Nationale, I was more than once invited by perfect strangers to

partake of something—invitations which I declined with all politeness. I am yet only half out of the wood, and I must keep up my training to the very end of the six weeks. Among other signs of my being quite a celebrity in a small way is the fact that one of the leading photographers of the town asked me to allow myself to be photographed—a ceremony which took place on my way down to my appointment.

My friend told me, when I arrived at his office, that he was relieved to see me come, for he certainly expected me to spend the day in bed. We sent out for the papers to see what was said in them of my performance.

La Dépêche has the following—

“Rarely have we seen such a crowd within the precincts of the Lille Vélodrome. The Grand Stand was filled with a crowd of spectators who took an intense interest in the sensational races which they saw

“An amateur, M. William Howell, who had engaged to run, walk, bicycle, ride a kilometer, doing the four in fifteen minutes, easily kept his word, covering the kilometers in 12 minutes 25½ seconds.

“The second attraction of the day, and the principal event, was the challenge made by M.

William Howell to ride against Madlle. Dutrieu over a distance of twenty kilometers, with four horses. M. Howell was to ride against Madlle. Dutrieu on her bicycle.

"M. William, who during this race, full of exciting incidents, had given proof of an unconquerable energy and a perseverance above all praise, was not able to win. Madlle. Dutrieu, paced by MM. Dupard, *frères*, outdistanced her opponent, and arrived first with a lead of two kilometers.

"The two champions raced at a terrific speed, and if the superb performance of Madlle. Dutrieu was admired by the people, no less applause was given to the loser, who, without allowing himself to be disconcerted by several falls which he had, without being frightened at the frequent swervings of his capricious steeds, courageously continued the race under the eyes of a public wild with enthusiasm.

"After such an interesting day as yesterday, perhaps our readers would like to know a little more of M. William Howell of whom we have just spoken.

"This young Englishman made three weeks ago in London a bet that he would stay in France for six weeks, with the only resource of giving lessons or otherwise earning his living by means of sport.

"Up to now M. Howell, who has made his bet

for the honour of French hospitality, has only had to put out his hand and receive the means of living, and we are confident that he will return winner of this original bet."

The *Echo du Nord* writes—

"*Lille Vélodrome*.—Very brilliant meeting yesterday at the Vélodrome in spite of some few showers. The spectacle was not an ordinary one, and the lovers of sensational matches were present in great number round the track.

"M. William Howell had, as every one knows, declared his intention to run a kilometer, etc. He easily performed this, doing them in twelve minutes twenty-five and a quarter seconds. Here are the details—

1st kilometer at a walk	..	4 min. 46 sec.
2nd kilometer at a run	..	3 " 45 "
3rd kilometer on a bicycle	..	2 " 9 "
4th kilometer on horseback ...	1 " 45 "	
Total 4 kilometers in		12 " 25 "

"But the *clou* of the day was the great match arranged between M. Howell on horseback and Madlle. Dutrieu on a bicycle.

"The start took place at a good speed. At the end of the sixth lap the horse swerved off the

course, and M. Howell fell. At the ninth lap again he came off. At the twelfth the horseman is passed ; Madlle. Dutrieu gained ground all the time. Another fall, this time on the cement, takes place at the twenty-second lap. M. Howell is again passed at the twenty-fourth lap and fell again, he changing horses at the thirty-fourth. At last victory remained with Madlle. Dutrieu, who covered her distance in thirty-five minutes twenty and a-quarter seconds, amidst the applause of the great crowd who thronged the Vélodrome. M. Howell lost altogether five and a-half laps ; he gave proofs of an indomitable courage, and the spectators were not chary in the way they cheered him."

The *Réveil du Nord* gives the following account—

"*Lille Vélodrome*.—The Vélodrome company has henceforth the secret for securing a big gate-money. It is satisfied with presenting to the public a spectacle, more or less eccentric, resembling rather the *clowneries* of a circus than cycling sport as it is properly understood. The large number of spectators sufficiently proves it.

"An English 'sportsman,' M. Howell, was announced to ride on horseback a twenty-kilometer race against the lady-bicyclist, Madlle. Dutrieu.

The triumph of the young cyclist was certain, especially as M. Howell had at his disposal horses which were not accustomed to that kind of contest.

“In spite of innumerable falls, the horseman continued to ride with an energy, above the ordinary, and worthy of a better cause.”

To call my little race a *clownerie* is rather galling. All I can say is that I wish it had been a *clownerie*, for clowns, I believe, can manage to fall without hurt, which I was unable to do yesterday, as my aching bones only too forcibly tell me to-day. B——t and I laughed heartily over some of these comments, which all agree, however, in praising my energy, for which I am much obliged.

At the office of the Vélodrome I met one of my most zealous helpers of yesterday. He invited me to lunch. As my rules and regulations do not allow me to accept meals without paying for them, I accepted his kind invitation on the condition that he would allow me to pay fifty centimes for my entertainment. We had a pleasant meal, and talked over the incidents of yesterday. My host told me that everybody with whom he had spoken agreed in praising my perseverance and pluck. Indeed it has come on me with quite a surprise

that I am become known for these qualities. Everybody does not know, however, that I was dazed and almost unaccountable for my actions.

I had received an invitation from a gentleman living in the country asking me to stay for a few days with him and earn my board and lodging by giving him lessons in billiards. I had therefore arranged to go to his place to-day, but a telegram from him to the effect that he was suddenly called from home, changed my plans, and so I shall go to Valenciennes by the evening train to-morrow. I have decided upon that town because I have been told that there is a bicycle track, several sporting clubs, and it is not far from here. Letters of recommendation from Lille sportsmen were given me, and so I hope to be able to do something there.

B——t, good-naturedly wishful to increase my gains, asked me to give him a rowing lesson this afternoon, and accordingly I proceeded to the club-house, where we changed, and got into an out-rigged, sliding-seated skiff. I soon saw that my friend was hardly in need of instruction, but we rowed up and down the canal several times. Afterwards we changed position, I taking the sculls and leaving the rudder to him. It was

delightful once again to send a boat along over the rippling water. It reminded me of my last boating excursion a month ago at Maidenhead, when I rowed a big-eyed damsel up the Thames, and had a cosy tea on the willow-shaded banks. I could not help laughing aloud—much to B——t's surprise—at the position in which I found myself, and the difference in this and my last boating trip. Here was I, sculling for five francs and coaching as good a man as myself, whilst on the last occasion Miss Big-Eyes and I leisurely floated down stream, thinking of nothing, I am sure, so mundane as the state of our purses, or how we were to manage to live for the next three weeks—and put by two pounds beside. But there, existence is full of such kaleidoscopic changes of scene.

During the lesson on the dirty Lille canal, I was introduced to a compatriot—a resident in the town. Since I landed in Calais I had not met a single Englishman, and I was glad to speak once again my mother tongue. He had been present at yesterday's performance, and was good enough to express his admiration. Afterwards he invited me to supper at his house. I accepted with alacrity, but first of all had to pose the inexorable condition that I should pay fifty

centimes for the meal. My host thoroughly understood my reasons, and good-naturedly made no bother about my proposal. We proceeded to his house, a pretty villa in the suburbs, and I was introduced to his wife and brother. I don't know when I have enjoyed a more pleasant evening. Of course my deeds of yesterday came in for discussion. But the pleasure of the agreeable company of compatriots was further enhanced. After supper when the word was given for smoking, I was proceeding to light one of my French cigarettes, when my host asked me whether I did not smoke a pipe. "Yes," I replied, "in England where decent pipe tobacco is obtainable, I smoke nothing else."

"Well," said my host, "put that cigarette away ; here's a pipe and English tobacco."

The pleasure of it ! People may talk of the exquisite bliss experienced by thirsty desert-crossers when they get to water, or the joy of the famished traveller when he gets food, but all these feelings are not to be compared to those of a man who, after a severe course of French tobacco, comes on a pipe and English navy-cut. I know that if ever I drop into poetry it will be on this subject, so I will cut short my raptures now before

committing myself. It can well be imagined how pleasantly the evening passed in such agreeable company, and with the additional delight which only a man long-deprived of his favourite weed can well understand. With mutual promises to see each other, I left my host and his family and mounted my bicycle. It was a lovely night with a bright moon, and I needed no lantern on my machine, but fine or dark the regulations of the town demand it. Consequently as I entered the boulevard I was stopped by an *agent de police*.

"Hi!" he shouted, "stop! Where's your lantern?" In spite of my curiosity to see what the mysterious *procès-verbal* is like, I did not wish to have one "dressed" against me just on the eve of my departure for Valenciennes, so I answered the officer in my best broken French—a mode of speech which has often helped me in such encounters—that I did not know that a light was required. Whereupon a little dialogue ensued.

"*Vous n'êtes pas Français ?*" said the agent.

"*Nong, Mossou,*" I replied.

"*Mais de quel pays sortez-vous donc ?*" he asked.

"*Angleterre,*" was the answer.

"*Pourtant chez vous c'est défendu de circuler la nuit à bicyclette sans lanterne, n'est-ce pas ?*"

"*Nong, Mossoo*," was again my reply.

"*Drôle de pays, cette Angleterre !*" he muttered, and then let me go.

My Lille acquaintances have one and all been chaffing me to-day, saying that my performance of yesterday aroused no small interest and admiration in the breasts of my feminine spectators, and declaring that I should certainly receive several *billets-doux* from them expressing these feelings, and a wish to make my acquaintance. I was not altogether surprised, therefore, to find on my arrival at the hotel, a letter addressed to me by my *nom de guerre* of yesterday. On opening it, however, I found that it was from no fair lady, but from a man who is anxious to help me. This is what he says—

"*Lille.*

"Sir, I should have gone to see you yesterday at the Vélodrome if I had not heard that you were going to ride horses that you had not tried, and which were not accustomed to a performance calculated to frighten them, and which could not be gone through unless the rider wore spurs. What I expected in such a case happened. On a good track, with good horses, you would have won.

"Although I avoided going to witness your

defeat, I remain an admirer of your courage and congratulate you.

"I should indeed like to be rich. For then I should ask you to give me lessons—in what? That would not matter provided I could help you. If you are in Lille for a few more days, try and meet me and we shall be able to have a chat. I have, perhaps, some happy ideas to communicate about horses, cycling, and dancing."

Here follows a list of *cafés* where my admirer would be this evening, but as I arrived back too late I shall be obliged to quit the place without seeing this gentleman.

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
In hand this morning	2	25
Advance from Vélodrome Co.	5	0
Recd. for rowing lesson	5	0
	12	25

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
Spent	55	luncheon.
7	0	tips for yesterday
	40	beer.
	50	supper.
	65	stamps.
	9	10

Leaving in hand 3 francs 15 cents.

CHAPTER IV

Valenciennes—Jeu de Balle—Arrangements for a Performance—A New Item—A rude “Commercial”—Newspaper Notices—The Fortifications—The “Walz Record”—Teaching Grisettes to Bicycle—Compatriots—Performance at Vélodrome—Victory over Local Champions—Incidents—Thunderstorm—Terrible Hailstorm—Destruction—Adventure with French Maid—English and French Law Procedure—Conversation with French Soldier—Discipline—Incidents of the War of '70—Newspaper Notice—Difficulties of my Position—Pleasant Ride—Swimming Performance—Good-byes—Departure from Valenciennes.

IF anything my stiffness was more perceptible **Twenty-** this morning than yesterday. My **sixth Day:** bruises ache with a dead pain which **Valenciennes.** has interfered somewhat with my night's rest. It is wonderful how quickly one becomes attached to a place. I am quite sad at leaving Lille, where everybody has been so kind and hospitable towards me. Far and away the most disagreeable part of my trip is the necessity for being constantly on the move. I cannot abuse the kindness of my Lille friends and stay here

altogether, but must be off again and go through the task of making myself known in another town. I shall have, of course, an easier task at Valenciennes than I had on my arrival at Lille, but it is always unpleasant to leave people who have been kind and agreeable, and start afresh with new faces. But *on s'habitue à tout*, and the necessity for making a fresh move is too evident. If any one six weeks ago had prophesied that I should in a short time be wandering about from town to town in France trying to earn my living by means of my sporting abilities, I should have put him down as the falsest of impostors. Yet here I am doing that very same thing, and even getting quite accustomed to it. Verily the wheel of life turns up some funny things, and I begin to say that that man who says he is ready for any of fortune's little vagaries is more or less of a fool.

To say good-bye to all my friends and acquaintances was quite an effort, and I was sad and depressed as I went to the station and took a second-class ticket for Valenciennes. The reason for this extravagance in my mode of travel is explained by the fact that my riding experiences on Sunday have had the effect of rendering one part of my body extremely tender, and it would

have been absolute agony to have travelled in a wooden-seated third-class compartment.

In the train I had quite a modest little adventure. I was the only occupant of my compartment, and was—with true British selfishness—eager to have it all to myself. The train was just about to start, and I was congratulating myself on my good luck, when the door opened and in came a very elegant though ~~close~~-veiled widow. I had noticed her before walking up and down the platform and looking into the various carriages, and had supposed that she was on the look-out for a friend. She had peered into my compartment and had gone forward. Evidently, so I thought, she had been surprised by the cry of *En voiture, Madame, s'il vous plait*, and had bundled into the first carriage. Now, nobody can accuse me of want of respect for the fair sex, but I must confess that I have an absolute horror of widows. They are such insidious creatures, and have a way about them which is difficult to define, but which is none the less charming. It is my firm conviction that when a widow makes up her mind to marry a man, she is simply bound to succeed. I have watched—from a safe distance, *bien entendu*, the manners and customs of the *genre* widow. One

result of my observation is that the deeper the mourning she wears, the more dangerous she is. It is her war-paint, and, when she is on the war-path, woe betide the hapless man who meets her. What can one say to a woman who with tears in her pretty eyes tells the sad tale of the death of her dear husband? Does not the foolish fellow to whom she pours out her woes, invariably try to console her? His pity, poor man, soon merges into love, and then he is hooked and netted. No, I must say, I don't like widows; there is something aggressively pathetic about them that nearly always brings down to his knees the man who falls within their influence.

Such being my opinions I behaved with the utmost discretion in the company of my fair fellow-traveller. I had gone to the extravagance of buying an English newspaper, and was reading it at the further end of the carriage in such a position that to look at each other it was necessary to turn the head in a most marked manner. I need not say that I did no such thing, but continued reading until a sweet voice interrupted me with

"Monsieur, would you mind shutting this window near me? It seems to have caught."

Of course I at once crossed over to where she

was sitting and pulled up the window with an ease which convinced me that the fair widow was telling a fib. As soon as it was shut and fixed, I was overwhelmed with thanks.

"Monsieur is so kind, I am so sorry to have taken him from his book for even a moment." All of which little speech conveyed to me the fact that the widow *want* to have a chat—and whoever can resist a widow when she makes up her mind about something? So I put down my book and protested that I preferred talking to reading, especially if Madame would not think me too bold in talking to her.

"Not at all," said Madame, and then I—poor I, a widow fearer—found myself alone with about the only thing I am really afraid of in this world, barring the dentist.

All this time my fellow-traveller still kept her veil down, but now she complained of the closeness of the carriage and lifted it. Certainly even my aversion to widows began to melt away at the sight of such a pretty face. The little humbug looked up into my eyes as one who would say: "Well, what do you think of me?" In answer to the obvious though unexpressed question, I could not help saying, *Mais, Madame, vous êtes*

ravissante," and she received the compliment with a smile.

We entered into a conversation, and my pretty widow told me that she had seen me on Sunday at the Velodrome and had admired greatly my energy and courage.

"Ah," said she, "it ought to be a glorious feeling to gallop along past an applauding public, to fall, to get up and go on with the *pertinacite d'un bouledog*; to feel that your courage is appreciated, and that you would rather die than give in. *Oui ça doit être vraiment beau !*"

I tried to put the matter in another and less sublime light. I assured her that it was not at all *vraiment beau* to fall from a horse going at full gallop, but that on the contrary it was very painful. As for pertinacity, I told her that it was due to the stupefaction of a dazed man, and perhaps to the dread of a violent outburst on the part of the mob. But this explanation did not at all satisfy her. She burst out—

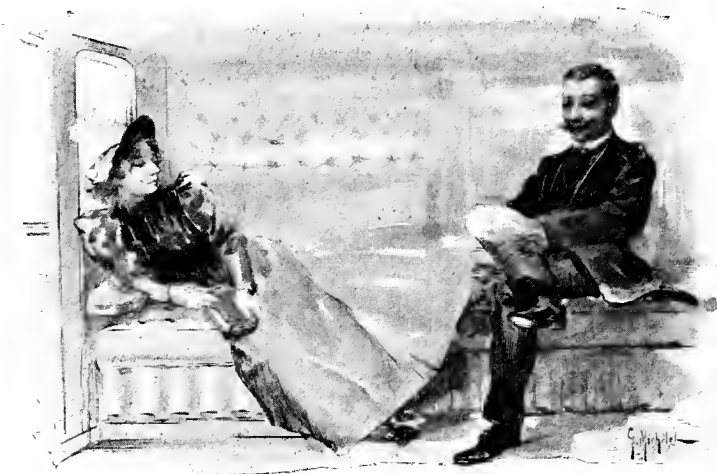
"No, Monsieur, you are a man of courage; I adore men of courage."

Now could there be anything more embarrassing for a shy—widow-shy—young man like myself? In vain I tried to convince her that the true

courage was moral courage, and not the quality which she admired in me.

"Besides," said I, "one may admire a quality in a person without admiring the person himself."

"But it is not like that with me," said the widow in answer to this piece of sophistry on my part.



"NO, MONSIEUR, YOU ARE A MAN OF COURAGE."

"When I love a quality, I love the person who possesses it."

This declaration was accompanied by such a tender look as would have melted St. Antony himself. I had serious thoughts of assuring my would-be captor that I was a married man, and expected my wife at the next station. But I was still more concerned for my well-nursed prejudice

against widows which seemed to be fast disappearing. My embarrassment was becoming extreme when I felt that the train was slowing up to enter a station. The widow, who still fixed me with her eye, at the same time suddenly announced that she intended getting out, for she lived at that town. I am afraid I showed too much alacrity in getting up and opening the door for her. To my astonishment and surprise, just as the train stopped, she got up and kissed me, saying, "You are like Gustave *que ne savait pas s'y prendre*," and skipped on to the platform, leaving me in a state of mind verging on the imbecile. Before leaving the station, however, she turned round and cried, "We shall see each other again soon." But I said to myself now she had removed her too charming influence, "I'll be hanged if we do."

I arrived at Valenciennes about dusk, and after leaving my baggage at the hotel, sallied forth to present my letters. Unfortunately everybody seems to be away at the sea-side, and so the President of the Vélo Club was not to be found. After some trouble I found a gentleman who, after reading my letters and talking over my plans, promised to call a special meeting of the Vélo Club committee to-morrow night to see what could be done. He informed me that he was afraid it would

be very difficult to organize a meeting at the Vélodrome for Sunday, since they had already organized some road races for that day.

This was not cheerful news, but remembering how black everything looked at one time at Lille, and how things turned out better afterwards, I consoled myself. The Grande Place of Valenciennes is very fine—the Hôtel de Ville, which forms a great part of one of its sides, is particularly imposing.

The Vélodrome Company at Lille paid my hotel bill to-day, and gave me twenty francs as payment for my services on Sunday. They were anxious to give me more, but the conditions of my bet would not admit of too great a recompense.

	FRANCS. CENTS.	
In hand this morning	.. 3	15
Received from Vélodrome Co.	20	0
	<hr/> 23	15

	FRANCS. CENTS.	
Spent	1	0 tip.
	4	45 train.
	1	35 luncheon.
		25 newspaper.
		50 letters.
		40 coffee.
	<hr/> 6	95

Leaving in hand 16 francs 20 cents.

The weather since I have come to France has been phenomenal; scarcely a day **Twenty-seventh Day:** has passed without downpours of **Valenciennes.** rain, and to-day it is the same—rain, two minutes of sun, and rain again.

I presented my other letters of introduction, and was everywhere received with kindness. During my walks I had the opportunity of seeing the town. The more I see of the Grande Place the more I admire it. Its proportions are noble and regular, and the fine Town-hall is a splendid bit of architecture. Close by it is the Theatre, the lower part of which dates back to the Spanish occupation. At one corner of the Place are two houses of the same period, leaning against each other as much as to say, "We must hold together, we old ones, against the invasion of modern buildings." Their basements are flush with the walls of the adjoining houses; the first story, however, projects beyond, and the second still more, so that they have the appearance of being on the point of toppling off into the street.

Valenciennes is the birthplace of, among other celebrities, Froissart and Watteau. It is remarkable how the inhabitants of the town and district are naturally endowed in the matter of art.

I was told to-day that a great percentage of the winners of the Prix de Rome have come from here. Every one has heard of the lace that used to be made here. The industry has now entirely disappeared ; now and again, so I was informed, it is possible to pick up pieces of the real old stuff in some of the old farm-houses in the district. Buying antiquities in old farm-houses certainly has the charm of uncertainty, but the following experience of mine will show that the unsophisticated farmer with a clock to sell, "that has been in the family for over a century," is not always so simple as he looks. I had seen down in the wilds of Norfolk a very nice old kitchen settee in black oak. The owner—a farmer—wanted a fairly good price for it. Although far from suspecting that the thing was "faked," and the colour not due to age but chemicals, I applied a test for these same chemicals and soon found traces of their presence. I went for the farmer, who, after a good deal of shuffling, acknowledged that the thing had been brought down from London by a Jew and left with him with the promise of a handsome commission if he sold it! Everything that glitters is not gold, nor is everything old in farm-houses.

I made the acquaintance this morning of a

member of the *Union Nautique*, who invited me to go down to the club-house and see it ; I accordingly accompanied him down to the banks of the canalized river. There was a good collection of boats, four-oared outriggers and galleys, and a good many skiffs and canoes. The accommodation was very good, and the members' club-room was very nicely got up. The champion sculler of the club went out, and I was able to give him a little gratuitous coaching. He has some of the faults of all young rowers, and is too much inclined to pull with his arms and not use his back. I had expressed the wish to see the game which the French call *jeu de balle*, and the members assembled at the club-house were good enough to organize a game on the ground attached to their *locale*. I took part in it, and was told that I did very well. The game is a difficult one to explain. We played it four a side, but I believe it is generally played by a greater number. The court is about thirty yards long and about twelve broad, and is divided into two equal parts. One man of our side takes the ball, which is much like our racquet ball, and serves over the halfway-line to his opponents, who must return it either at the volley or first bounce. If the opposite side miss the ball, or rather fail to

return it, the other players advance over the line to where the ball has been stopped, so crowding the defending players into a small space. This goes on until one side or the other has scored a game, which is counted fifteen, thirty, forty, game, as with our lawn-tennis. The game is very interesting, and gives unlimited opportunities for skill and a quick eye. It is played without racquets, but gloves are sometimes worn. One of our players served the ball remarkably well, and drove it nearly sixty yards. I should say it would become very popular in England, since it is a game which requires a considerable amount of agility as well as skill.

In the evening I attended the meeting of the committee of the Vélo Club. I could not help being amused at the way in which I read out my letters of recommendation to the members as well as the newspaper reports on my Sunday's performance—a proceeding which reminded me of an *artiste* seeking an engagement from a manager and giving the press criticisms and a list of his *répertoire*. Mine was unfortunately rather a limited one, my four-kilometer business and a horse-race against a bicyclist. I suggested that I might arrange a foot-race against one of the local champion runners.

The difficulty to be got over was the fact that there had already been arranged for Sunday afternoon a big road race for the members of the club. After many suggestions had been offered and the affair had been well discussed, the committee, in the most generous way possible, decided to advance the road race to nine o'clock in the morning, and arrange a special meeting for me at the Vélodrome in the afternoon. Any one who has had to do with the arrangement of such affairs can well understand the handsome way in which this decision was arrived at. I returned thanks in my best French and with real gratitude.

We left the place of meeting, and I accompanied some of the members to the Grande Place, where I drank a glass of beer before turning in. The moon was shining brightly, and from where I was sitting I could see its light piercing the lace-like tracery on the top of the Hôtel de Ville. Altogether this noble building and the noble square in which it stands seem to me to form the prettiest picture I have ever seen in a town.

My hotel is a small hostelry frequented by commercial travellers. I have a fondness for them in England, but I find their French *confrères* much inferior, both in culture and in their conversation.

Here lunch and dinner are served at certain hours, and the three big tables are thronged by the knights of the order-book. I suppose I am the only guest who is not a "commercial gent." All of them seem to have but little intercourse with each other, probably because they are rivals. I tried to enter into conversation with my right-hand neighbour to-night, but he was too monosyllabic in his answers to make me wish to continue the conversation. Opposite me at dinner sat another *commis voyageur*, fat, and greasy of countenance. He ate his meal in a way which was absolutely disgusting. It was with difficulty that I was able to get through the dinner, so noisily and selfishly did he eat. Having consumed enough food to satisfy a boa-constrictor, he opened his mouth and began to talk—to nobody in particular, as far as I could see. He proceeded to inform the table that he had just come from Vichy, where he had been ordered to go on account of some malady of the stomach. Not content with giving us this utterly uninteresting piece of news, he plunged into minute details as to the nature of his disease. This I could not stand, so I said—

"Monsieur, you would oblige both me and, I am sure, the rest of the guests by abstaining from a

detailed description of your ailment, which is more fitted for the *clinique* of a hospital than a hotel *table-d'hôte*."

There was complete silence by the time I had finished this speech, but several of my neighbours expressed aloud their approval of what I said, and my fat friend, finding he was unsupported by public opinion, tried to stare me out of face, and then suddenly got up and left the room.

In hand this morning, 16 francs 20 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	60 cigarettes.
	40 coffee.
	75 letters and stamp.
	<hr/>
I	75

Leaving in hand 14 francs 45 cents.

This morning I interviewed several journalists and gave them an account of my **Twenty-eighth Day:** adventures. Afterwards, I strolled **Valenciennes.** down to the club-house of the *Union Nautique* and went out in a skiff. The weather was wet and nasty, and I did not remain long on the water. I am beginning to think that I shall never see the sun again. For the last three weeks the weather has been truly awful, and I am

told that the corn and other crops have suffered very serious damage.

The following placards are posted up throughout the town—

GREAT ATTRACTION !

Vélodrome Dampierre.

SUNDAY.

GREAT MATCH between M. WILLIAM HOWELL
and the best runner of the town.

Distance 1 kilometer.

MATCH between M. WILLIAM HOWELL on horse-
back and a bicyclist.

Distance 2 kilometers.

BICYCLE OBSTACLE RACE.

M. WILLIAM HOWELL will try to beat his Lille
record, where in 12 min. $12\frac{1}{2}$ sec. he covered 4
kilometers, thus : 1 kil. walking, etc., etc.

Then follows the announcement of some other
bicycle races and the prices. From this it will be
seen that there is a new item in my programme,
that of a race between myself and the best runner
in the town. I hope I shall win, but I anticipate
some difficulty, because I am told that the miners
and workmen in the neighbourhood go in for this
form of sport to a very great extent. The race

between me on horseback and the cyclist is only for a distance of two kilometers, so that I shall have no changing of horses to do, and hope that there will not be a recurrence of Sunday's disasters.

A kind friend, M. C——, took me this evening through the winding streets of the place, and showed me a good many old Spanish houses. One is particularly fine ; I was informed that it is well known among architects because a huge stone, used in the house, forms at one and the same time one of the steps for going up to the first floor and the cross beam of the door.

In hand this morning, 14 francs 45 cents.

CENTS.

Spent	40 coffee.
	35 tobacco.
	15 stamps.
	<hr/>
	90

Leaving in hand 13 francs 55 cents.

The newspapers appeared with an account of my
Twenty-ninth bet and the details of my proposed
Day: performance on Sunday. In conse-
Valenciennes. quence I am now recognized as the
 eccentric Englishman when I walk the streets,
 and have been greeted several times by perfect

strangers. There is one gentleman in the town, whose acquaintance I made yesterday, who is quite determined to show his appreciation of my efforts to win my bet. Whenever I pass his residence, and he sees me, he invariably invites me to enter and share a half bottle of champagne with him. I told him to-day that this would interfere with my training, and so he has let me off further participation in the sparkling wine until after Sunday, when he threatens me with a magnum.

At lunch to-day I was much amused by a conversation which was being carried on by two of my neighbours. One of them began by asking the other whether he had seen in the newspaper the account of that extraordinary bet made by an Englishman who is now at Valenciennes.

“No,” answered No. 2; “what is it all about?”

“The newspapers this morning say that this young Englishman has made a bet of twelve thousand francs that he will live during six weeks in France simply and solely by sport.”

“But what is he doing here?”

“Oh,” said No. 1, “it seems that on Sunday he is going to give a performance at the Vélodrome here, when he hopes to earn a little money. He

has done the same kind of thing at Lille, and was there very successful."

"Bah!" from No. 2. "I know what that means. It is simply a dodge of the Vélodrome to advertise their meeting. I should not mind betting that this same Englishman was born in Paris and cannot even say 'Yes.' As for the story of the bet, that, you may depend upon it, is nothing else but a *blague*."

"But," persisted No. 1, "I know that at Lille he brought together at the Vélodrome a big crowd, and absolutely refused to accept more money than was sufficient to pay his hotel bill and come on here."

"Who told you that?" said the other.

"Oh, I heard that at Lille from several people," was the answer.

"Then you may make up your mind it's a fable."

"Shall you go on Sunday?" asked No. 1.

"Well, 'I don't know. This place is such a forsaken hole that there will be nothing else to do, so I dare say I shall."

I suppose it never entered into these persons' head that I was the hero of their conversation, but the waiter, who knew who I was, very nearly let fall several dishes in his nervousness lest I should

resent their remarks ; especially, since at last night's dinner I created more or less of a scene with the fat man who has now disappeared.

The question of horses for Sunday has to be solved here as well as at Lille, but the difficulties will not be so great. In fact there are, it seems, two animals at a little town twelve miles off, which can be readily hired. Accompanied by the son of the Vice-President of the club, I proceeded there by train and tried them. They will do for the comparatively easy work of Sunday, and we came back very soon.

The system of light road-train or rather steam-trams is very much developed in the neighbourhood of Valenciennes. Farmers' produce is quickly and cheaply carried to the main lines along the high-road. The passenger traffic, too, is very great, and all the villages around are connected by this ramification of steam-trams. The company which runs them is, I believe, Belgian.

I have arranged to return to Lille for next Sunday week, where there is to be a monster *fête* given by the Vélodrome. So my future is more or less settled, and I begin to see a way of winning my bet. So far, I have only thirteen francs in hand. The Vélo Club here will pay my hotel bill,

so that by the time I get back to Lille I shall have but very little money, if any, towards my travelling expenses and my two pounds which I must take intact to London. That is the most difficult condition of my bet, and I do not feel entirely free from anxiety with regard to fulfilling it.

This evening I attended another meeting of the committee of the Vélo Club, when we arranged the details of the performance. Everybody seemed to vie with each other in their wish to make things pleasant and agreeable for me, and I am becoming quite attached to such generous and kindly friends.

In hand this morning, 13 francs 55 cents.

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
Spent	1	20 train.
		60 beer.
		50 stamps.
	2	30

Leaving in hand 11 francs 25 cents.

I was surprised and pleased to find the weather fine when I got up. I hope sincerely
Thirtieth Day: that it will not rain to-morrow, for
Valenciennes. the Vélo Club has incurred a good deal of expense in the arranging of the affair, and it would indeed be hard luck on them if the rain should spoil the meeting.

I was accommodated by a kind friend with the loan of a bicycle, and rode to the Vélodrome to see what would have to be done. It is a cinder track, but the place where the horse will have to race is rather bad and will require some arranging. The man who is to run against me was presented to me in the afternoon. He is a newspaper seller by trade, and from what he tells me he seems to have done some very good long-distance runs. He looks very fit, too, and I shall doubtless have some difficulty in beating him.

I took the opportunity of having a bicycle to go and look round the fortifications, which are now in process of demolition. They were by the celebrated Vauban, and of immense extent. Indeed before modern artillery had arrived at its present destructive power, it was almost impregnable. Now, however, the town is getting larger, and the old walls are being knocked down to make way for the jerry builder. It seems a pity, however, that the municipality should destroy the grand old gates. They, at any rate, might have been left, for the space they occupied was but small. It is the same at St. Omer. To my mind it is utter vandalism to throw down such fine old monuments of former days when Valenciennes was

thronged with Spanish grandees or Flemish men-at-arms.

I got a letter this afternoon from the man who wrote me a letter at Lille. I thought that my bet was fairly original, but the proposition contained in the letter goes one better. He informs me that he has every wish to help me on in the arduous task which I have set before me, and begs to give me the benefit of an idea which, he hopes, may be useful. His proposition is that on my return to Lille, I should organize what he calls the "waltz record." I do not quite understand whether he means me to dance before a numerous public until I succeed in keeping at it longer than any one has ever been able to do before, or whether he intends me to organize a *fête* and offer a prize for the longest stayer—the proceeds of the said *fête* to go to help me on my way. Somehow I do not quite take to the idea of dancing like a bear in public, and the organization of a "waltz record" would be too risky for me to engage in. I shall therefore decline with many thanks the proposal of this gentleman.

I went to the Vélodrome and did a little training. I ran the kilometer in three minutes twenty-five seconds, and walked it in five minutes forty-

two seconds, which is nothing wonderful, but keeps my muscles and wind in good condition. I returned to dinner by the Faubourg, and on my way back I was requested by some dainty little French grisettes—the tribe exists no longer in Paris, but still flourishes in some of the provincial towns—to give them a lesson on my bicycle. I acceded to their request, and spent nearly an hour teaching them one by one the beauties of the art of balancing oneself on two wheels. I could not help being heartily amused at the position in which I found myself. Here was I, who some few short weeks ago had walked down Piccadilly in the starchiest of collars, the shiniest of hats, and the neatest of gloves and boots, now trundling a lot of laughing French grisettes along the main street of the Faubourg, dressed in a dirty knickerbocker suit, and, what was still more of a contrast, enjoying myself as I have never done on the London pavement. The gathering gloom at last obliged me to give up my lesson, but before I left each of my pupils had thanked me in the heartiest possible way, and had, one after the other, imprinted in the most embarrassing fashion, for a shy man, a kiss on my cheeks, to show that they were



TRUNDLING A LOT OF LAUGHING GRISETTES.

grateful and had been delighted with their little jaunt.

At dinner to-day one of my fellow-guests came over to where I was sitting, and told me that he had witnessed my performance at Lille and wished to congratulate me. He paid me innumerable compliments about my performances.

“After seeing you on Sunday, I began to understand what was that English bulldog pertinacity of which I had before only read.”

I bowed at this flattering remark, and hope I blushed.

It is wonderful how difficult it would be for an Englishman to get away from his compatriots. There are few corners of the world which I have visited where I have not found an Englishman, or traces of one. To-night as I was going to report progress to the Vice-President I saw him standing outside a carriage full of ladies and packages. When he saw me he called me up and presented me to three charming English ladies, mother and two daughters, who live at some distance from Valenciennes. It was as delightful as it was unexpected to come across some countrywomen. Tomorrow I am to meet them again at luncheon, to which M. L——n has invited me.

There was a concert held on the Place Verte this evening, where the performers used nothing but *cornets de chasse*. The effect was extremely pleasing and harmonious, and the music was repeatedly applauded by the audience.

In hand this morning, 11 francs 25 cents.

FRANCS, CENTS.

Spent	20	coffee.
	80	beer for grisettes.
	15	stamp.
	<hr/>	
	1	15

Leaving in hand 10 francs 10 cents.

In spite of the pleasurable excitements of my trip, I shall be heartily glad when **Thirty-first Day:** my bet is won or lost and I shall **Valenciennes.** set foot in England. I do not mind roughing it in the open air, say, on a river expedition or camping out, but when I am obliged to experience the defects of a little French hotel it is infinitely worse than the most uncomfortable of camps. I suppose I am getting dainty. I thought the accommodation at Calais, Guemps, and St. Omer rather good, but it is the unsanitary state of my hotel and the insufficiency of water that makes me pine with a longing too great for words for my tub and my English breakfast.

My day has been a tiring and an exciting one. Here is the brief record of my work—I have ridden twenty-four miles on horseback, and twenty-four on my bicycle. In addition I have run a kilometer race against the champion of the district, done my four kilometers, ridden on horseback a two-kilometer race against a cyclist, had a long swim in the river, and, to end up, came in for the most terrific thunderstorm I have ever experienced in my life.

The morning was early when young L——n and I rode out of Valenciennes to get the horses for my performance. The weather was hot, and riding over the cobbles was far from agreeable. We had the pleasant duty confided to us of escorting back on horseback the carriage containing the English ladies who were coming into lunch, and who proposed seeing my performance. It was near one o'clock before we arrived back with the horses, and we immediately went into lunch, of which, to the evident disappointment of the kindest of hostesses, I partook very sparingly, in view of the work before me in the afternoon. Immediately afterwards I rode up to the Vélodrome, accompanied by my host, his family, and my fellow-guests.

On the ground I made my way to a shed which

had been set up as a dressing-room for those who wished to change into running things, and there found there were to be two local champions to run against me in the kilometer foot-race. On entering into conversation with them, I found that their chief preoccupation was what they would get in case they were beaten. I told them that ordinarily the man who was beaten did not get the prize, but they told me that they were poor men, and could not afford to spend the afternoon at the Vélodrome. One of them suggested a collection, which was eagerly agreed to by the other, and then both of them proposed that I should take the hat round. "You are a foreigner," they said, "and you will get much more money than if we went round. We can divide the proceeds equally between us." They were so fixed in their idea that I was a co-professional that it was useless to try and state the circumstances which were responsible for my appearing on the track, so I contented myself with declining to take round the hat or share in the result.

Last night the elder of the two runners had announced that he would be unable to take part in the race to-day because his wife would not allow him to run—which, with my Lille experience,

leads me to believe either that French wives are very masterful, or that they make excellent scape-goats. He recounted to me the clever way in which he was able to slip through his spouse's hands. She had left him lying on his bed seemingly asleep, and had turned the key in the door, but he made off by the window and arrived in safety on the ground, though by his searching looks among the spectators he seemed still to be rather afraid lest she should take it into her head to follow him and give him a public scolding.

The way in which my two adversaries had got themselves up for the race was something wonderful in the way of colours. The elder one wore a dark-blue sailor's jacket made of some shiny stuff, which reflected the sun like a looking-glass. His knickerbockers were made of a brilliant red silk, and his stockings were of a still more striking yellow. The other man was somewhat smaller, and his get-up rather less brilliant. He looked, too, as if he could go.

There was a goodly number of spectators on the ground, when, after drawing lots for the inside position, which I won, we arranged ourselves on the starting-line. Great interest was taken in the race, and I was told that there was a certain

amount of betting on the younger local champion. When the starter fired his pistol, we all three got off with an easy stride. There were three laps to be covered for the kilometer, and during the first we kept very close together. At the second I increased slightly the pace, for I was feeling very fresh, but my two friends stuck close to me. As we passed the crowd of onlookers I could perceive from their remarks that they were getting very keen about the race, and I heard them advise my younger adversary to put on the spurt. At this point the man of many colours dropped behind, and ultimately gave up altogether. At the beginning of the third lap my remaining opponent, evidently influenced by the remarks of the spectators, broke into a spurt. I waited until he had nearly caught me up, and then increased my speed. I was in excellent condition and wind, and continued the spurt, gradually forging ahead and leaving my adversary in the rear. For the last hundred yards I again increased my pace, and came in an easy winner by nine seconds; my time being three minutes twenty-one seconds, and his three minutes thirty seconds. In spite of the fact that I had beaten their champion, the public applauded me right heartily.

After this came a bicycle race, and then my four kilometers. One thing which was altogether against me was the excessive heat. It was impossible to get cool at all even sitting in the shade, and the slightest exertion produced extreme



I CAME IN AN EASY WINNER.

perspiration. I did not beat my Lille record except in the second kilometer, which I ran in three minutes thirty-three seconds. I had some difficulty in getting started with my bicycle, which was fitted with toe-guards, which are difficult things to catch going at any speed. The horse, too,

turned out a regular old screw, and his gallop was a very primitive kind of motion and far from fast. I did the whole four kilometers in thirteen minutes forty seconds.

My next item was the two-kilometer race on horseback against a cyclist. Mindful of last Sunday's disasters, I had the other horse taken right out of the ground, so that the animal I was to ride would not be so likely to leave the track to rejoin his companion. A very good cyclist, M. Raviart, was to be my opponent, and at the word we both made an excellent start. For the first four rounds we kept fairly close to each other, and then I pressed my gallant old horse into a quicker stride. The cyclist too put on a spurt, and we went along at full speed. The advantage I lost along the strait bit of track I always gained back again at the curves. My horse now had his blood thoroughly up, and the last round was covered in grand style. The cyclist was doing all he could to pass me, and my noble old steed was hurrying along at a headlong gallop. Taking curves at this speed was no joke. Both I and my horse were leaning at about an angle of seventy-five degrees towards the centre. The last curve was taken in this fashion—the cyclist about three yards

behind, and pedalling like an express engine, with only a hundred yards more to do. In spite of the plucky efforts of my horse I could not keep ahead, and amidst a scene of great excitement we arrived at the tape a dead heat.

The public were very pleased with my efforts, but what amused me very much was that, when they saw me do the kilometer at a walk, a good many absolutely refused to believe that I was not a professional. The fact is that I had two men to make the pace for me, and instead of keeping up a gentle trot as they did at Lille, the poor fellows insisted on trying to do it at a walk, and were consequently obliged to break into a run at every moment, to the huge delight of the on-lookers.

As soon as I had finished my work at the Vélodrome, I was invited by some members of the *Sport Nautique* to go down to their boat-house and have a swim, which I did with the greatest pleasure. The heat this afternoon has been something phenomenal, and when I did my performance I got into a state of perspiration which was simply terrible. In fact it was not until I had been swimming about for a quarter of an hour that I began to feel at all cool.

After my bath I returned on horseback to the town, and after giving the animals a rest, mounted again to return them to their owner—twelve miles away. Again I had the pleasure of escorting my compatriots in their carriage. It got very dark, and in the distance frequent flashes of lightning betokened a coming storm. However, we arrived without any rain at about 8.30, and in the pleasant company of my countrywomen the time passed so quickly that it was a good deal past eleven before young L——n and I mounted our bicycles to get home. We had not got far before the first roll of thunder told us we were in for a storm, but we were not prepared for the rapid way in which it approached us. I don't think I ever remember being out in such utter darkness. Although we kept within a yard of each other we could see nothing, and simply trusted to our ears and good luck. Every now and again the most vivid flashes of lightning lit up the road for a moment, and then left us in greater darkness and utterly dazzled. We rode on, however, as quickly as the conditions allowed, and had nearly got half-way to Valenciennes, when suddenly not only the road, but the whole country-side was illumined by one of the most vivid flashes I have ever seen



ONE OF THE MOST VIVID FLASHES I HAVE EVER SEEN.

Without exaggeration it lasted for about ten seconds, and during that time the lightning seemed to play about our machines in the most disagreeable way possible. Even before it ceased there was a rattle and roar which fairly shook the earth. I could absolutely see nothing, and hearing no machine ahead of me, thought for a moment my companion had been struck. However, in answer to my shout, he cried out that he was unhurt, and we continued as before. Soon afterwards we found a small inn still open, and we entered to wait for the storm to pass by, and were much amused by an anglo-phobe peasant, full of drink and strong language. In half-an-hour or so we were again *en route*, and arrived at Valenciennes a little after one o'clock in the morning. The variety of violent exercises which I have taken to-day made bed very welcome.

In hand this morning, 10 francs 10 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	60	beer and coffee.
	50	subscription to runners.
1	0	tip to stable-boy.
	35	beer.
	<hr/>	
2	45	

Leaving in hand 7 francs 65 cents.

The waiter who brought me my hot water this morning seemed in a state of great excitement, and asked me if I had been able to sleep.

Thirty-second Day:
Valenciennes.

“*Plûtôt*”—which means “rather”—“I slept like a pig,” I replied.

“Is it possible?” he demanded, with a look of incredulity.

“Why not?” said I. “Why on earth shouldn’t I have slept?”

“But, monsieur, did you hear nothing during the night?” he asked.

“Nothing,” said I. “What has happened?”

“But, monsieur, it is impossible not to have been awakened last night. I and everybody else in the hotel have been out of bed for nearly the whole of the night,” said the man.

“My good friend, instead of standing there and asking me whether I slept or not, will you kindly tell me what has taken place here in the night; not a murder, I hope?”

By this time the waiter’s look of wonder and astonishment had become something too comical for words. Looking towards the window, which I always kept wide open, he again burst forth—

"With the windows open, too! But, monsieur, you are joking."

He had now approached the window, and looking out he seemed to have seen something which still further increased his excitement. Turning towards me, he said—

"All I can say, monsieur, is that if you slept through the night without interruption, the last trump itself would never awaken you."

"Look here, my good man," said I, quite exasperated at the man's obstinacy in not telling me what *had* happened; "if you don't tell me why I ought to have been aroused from my sleep, I'll throw something at you."

"The hail, monsieur, the hail! Never within the memory of the oldest inhabitants has there been a storm so disastrous and terrible. Look, monsieur, just outside your window the glass roof of the passage is broken to pieces, and in the whole of the town there is not a single skylight intact."

I jumped out of bed, and sure enough the damage done was terrible. Every pane of glass was simply smashed to atoms, and the noise of it must have been something terrific. It certainly had not awakened me, but I recollected having a dream in which the chief actor was a drunken man who

constantly knocked every glass off the table with a thick cudgel. I suppose I had been so dead tired that even the noisy rattle of this disastrous hailstorm had failed to wake me. The waiter's surprise when he found I was not joking was amusingly great, and he scurried off to tell the rest of the house that a greater wonder than the hailstorm had happened—that a man had slept through it with his windows open.

The local newspaper, *Le Quotidien*, has the following about yesterday's performance—

“A good gathering of people assembled yesterday at the Vélodrome to witness the races and the performances of M. William Howell, who took part in two matches, and tried to beat his four-kilometer record.

“M. William Howell then tried to beat his Lille record. The following is the result of this attempt, which greatly interested the spectators—

1	kilometer at a walk	in	5	min.	38	sec.
1	„	running	„	3	„	33 „
1	„	bicycling	„	2	„	7 „
1	„	on horseback	„	<u>2</u>	„	<u>12</u> „
	4 kilometers	in	13	„	40	„

“M. Howell lost at least a minute in getting on

to his bicycle and horse ; the latter, too, was far from being a galloper of the best kind. Nevertheless, M. Howell beat the Lille record for the kilometer running.

“ In short, the *fête* was very amusing, and we owe our thanks to the Valenciennes Vélo Club and M. William Howell.”

For the first time since I arrived in France, I gave myself a little relaxation. Perhaps, considering the amount of exercise I have been taking, most people would expect the word “relaxation,” in my case, to mean a long repose on a soft sofa, or an afternoon on my bed. This, however, I did not do, but taking a tub from the *Union Nautique's* boat-house, I rowed up the river to the village of Trith, some four miles away from Valenciennes. On my way I saw everywhere evidences of last night's storm. Broken windows, trees uprooted, corn battered down to the ground, and numerous dead birds, showed that it had been one of unusual severity. In some cases, a peasant told me, the cattle in the fields had been stunned by blows from the hailstones, which were almost as big as a cricket-ball, and a man in the suburbs had his wrist broken.

As I lazily rowed up stream I began to perceive

that another storm would soon be upon me. Quickening my stroke, I managed to get to an inn on the bank before it broke on me. But what an inn! Last night's storm had demolished every single pane of glass, and in two cases had actually smashed the woodwork. The proprietor told me that at the works close by, some galvanized iron roofing had been broken, and in some cases perforated by the hail. I now begin to understand the waiter's astonishment at my having slept through it all.

After four or five lightning-flashes and accompanying thunder, the storm cleared off, and the sun came out in grand style. Continuing my way, I arrived towards noon at Trith, and lunched at a little inn. I had to wait some time while they cut in two a huge lime-tree which had fallen across the river and barred the way. The sun was agreeably hot after the late bad weather, and I lazily dropped down stream, just keeping my boat's head straight. I was awakened out of my day-dream by a voice hailing me from the bank, and I found that a neat-handed Phyllis wished to know whether I would row her to Valenciennes, where she had to do some shopping. I readily consented, and she stepped on board, showing a very handsome pair

of ankles. We had not gone very far when, after some little conversation, my companion asked me whether I was a Frenchman.

"No, my dear," I replied, "I'm an Englishman."

"Put me ashore! Put me ashore!" she cried. "I don't like to be with a foreigner."

"But, my dear," I said, "I'm not an ogre. I'll not eat you. There is nothing to fear. Still, if you wish it, I'll put you ashore, though I shall certainly miss your charming company."

This little compliment somewhat mollified her, and she consented to remain. Then ensued the most amusing cross-examination to which I have ever been subjected. First of all she asked me my name, then my profession, then what I was doing in France. Did I like the French people? Did I like Frenchwomen?—this with rather a sly look. Was it true that in England I could buy a wife? How many wives did an Englishman keep? Did Englishwomen wear white or black stockings? To this last question I did not feel quite qualified to return an answer. Was it true that they drank black beer in England, and that the policemen went about unarmed? How much a month did a servant get? Was she well treated? What did she have to eat?

My replies to the last questions were so satisfactory that my neat little friend said, "I should like to be a servant in England. Would you escort me over?"

I told her that I regretted very much that I could not manage it. She seemed quite hurt with my refusal, but when I landed her near Valenciennes she got cheery again, and blew me a kiss as she disappeared towards the town.

On arriving at my hotel I found a telegram awaiting me—"Director Lille Swimming Baths wishes to know whether you will give a lecture on swimming after having tried to beat record kilometer held by Standring, an Englishman. Reply." Everything now which can bring grist to my mill is satisfactory, and I telegraphed, "Yes, with pleasure." I have no idea, of course, what I shall have to do as regards the lecture, but, of course, I shall not beat the kilometer record. It would require months of water training to get me into record-breaking form—to which I have no aspirations.

I spent a long evening at the club—the *Sport Nautique*—which is *the* club of Valenciennes. For a long time I sat, surrounded by a large group of interested members, and gave them an account of

my adventures since I set foot in France. They all expressed themselves very anxious about the success of my enterprise. One of them, however, expressed his belief that unless I took care those two pounds would be my ruin. Indeed I am beginning to be of his opinion. I have proved that it is not difficult for me to earn my living according to the rules of the bet, but it is quite another thing to put by sufficient to pay my travelling expenses and have £2 over when I arrive in town.

It was very, very late—at least for a man in training—when I left the hospitable club. As a matter of fact, I had discussed with a very able lawyer the question between English and French law procedure. We agreed, finally, upon this formula—French law avenges and punishes crime, English law tries to do justice—perhaps, some people might say, a distinction without a difference.

Before I left the club, however, the members gave practical proof of their interest in my bet by arranging for Wednesday next a swimming *fête* at the club-house, where I am to disport myself in the river before a few *privilégiés*, who, of course, are to pay an entrance fee.

In hand this morning, 7 francs 65 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	1	80 lunch.
		25 tips.
		50 letters and postcards.
		<hr/>
	2	55

Leaving in hand 5 francs 10 cents.

It was a lovely day this morning, and I wandered
Thirty-third once more through the quaint old
Day: streets of Valenciennes and on to the
Valenciennes. old ramparts. There I met a soldier,
 and we fell into conversation. He was extremely
 intelligent; in fact he had passed his *baccalau-*
réat degree, and consequently had only a year's
 service to do. I asked him about the details
 of his work and how he liked it. He told me
 that, although on the whole he rather liked than
 disliked his military service, there were some very
 disagreeable drawbacks connected with it. The
 non-commissioned officers were always inclined to
 deal harshly with men of a better social status
 than themselves. The discipline is severe and
 strict; a man who strikes his "superior"—not
 "superior officer," which would not include the
 non-coms.—is liable to the penalty of death.

There is therefore no hope for a man who sometimes is harassed and bullied by a mere corporal who may have been a rag-picker before entering the regiment, nothing but uncomplaining obedience. My informant told me that he was a witness of a military execution. The condemned man was a young fellow of much intelligence and good family. He had been driven, by the brutal oppression of a sergeant, to the dire step of striking him. There was nothing for it but a court-martial, which ordered his execution. The poor fellow had been a general favourite with his companions, and a kind of informal deputation addressed themselves to the Colonel in the hope of getting the sentence changed into one of imprisonment, but the commanding officer sternly commanded them to go back to their barracks, at the same time telling them that they deserved themselves a severe punishment for their audacity. On the day of the execution the regiment was paraded, and this victim to the bullying of an ignorant sergeant met his death without faltering, while the firing party were all in tears.

Talking about the officers themselves, I was told that as a rule they were good soldiers and generally popular. Some, however, were nothing

less than cruel tyrants. "There is a short shrift for such," said my friend the soldier. "In the war of '70 more than one officer met his death at the beginning of an action, shot from behind. The other day, too, some soldiers of a cavalry regiment were loud in expressing their wishes for a war at once."

"But why at once?" asked I.

"Because," they answered, "our time is up in a month, but before leaving the regiment we should like to put a bullet into Major X——'s back."

The military code provides against the ill-feeling which might show itself after the men leave the service. For six months after, a man who strikes a superior under whom he has served is liable to military law, and therefore, in all probability, death. But there is still a further safeguard for the officers in that, even after the period of six months have elapsed, if a man quarrel with a superior he can be punished according to military law if it can be proved that the cause of the disagreement dates from the time of their military service.

Talking about the Lebel rifle, of which Frenchmen are so proud, the soldier told me that it was an accepted tradition in the barrack-room that every Foreign Power had tried its best to get hold

of a melinite cartridge in order to find out the ingredients of the powder, but that it had always failed, owing to the patriotism of every man in the army. I smiled at this, and told him I would undertake to get a dozen of them in a week. I do not know at all whether there is any truth in this tradition. All I can say is that I have had several times the melinite cartridge in my hand, and could have supplied our War Office with dozens.

Now that I am on the subject of wars and soldiers, I may as well tell what were the answers returned to me by a Frenchman and a German who had both gone through the campaign of '70—'71. I had asked each of them what was the most striking incident he had seen. The Frenchman related the following as being the most memorable episode in his experience—

“We were nearly three hundred men, and had been left in charge of a large château, situated on a hill, with orders to conceal our presence as much as possible. I, with six men, was posted in an upper room on the look-out for Prussians. After some time of waiting and watching, we perceived a solitary Uhlan riding towards us. He was following the road that passed out of rifle-shot distance from our station. As he got opposite the château

he stopped and examined it, and evidently saw something worthy of a nearer scrutiny. Our officer who had come into the room watched him turn his horse's head, and ride into a field which lay between us and the road. 'That fellow must never get away,' said he ; 'wait till he comes nearer, and then do for him and the horse.' We waited accordingly, and at last the poor fellow was well within range. Our best sharpshooter took aim and fired. The horse fell at once, and the rider, disentangling himself from the beast, tried to limp away, for he seemed to be wounded in the leg. Again our sharpshooter took a shot at him, and this time hit him high up in the leg. The poor fellow got down on one knee and both his hands and tried to crawl off. 'Shoot again !' said our officer, and at last the poor fellow was finished off just before he got out of the range. Why they did not send some men out to take him prisoner after the first shot I do not know, except that perhaps our captain was one of the most inhuman beasts I ever knew."

The German's experience which impressed him the most was this—"We had attacked a village garrisoned by nearly a thousand Frenchmen, and had at last driven them out. We had a good deal

of house-to-house fighting, and I was ordered with my men to take one big building occupied by a French captain and about forty men. He was conducting the defence in a most gallant way, and exposing himself freely at the windows, when I saw him fall. Soon after his men surrendered and I entered the house. On the table in the kitchen lay the gallant Frenchman, with a bullet through his forehead. He was quite dead, but his muscles still twitched and his right heel kept tapping on the deal table as though he was alive and trying to call our attention to him. That tap, tap, of the French captain's heel will always remain in my memory as the most gruesome sound I have ever heard."

To-day's *Quotidien* has the following—

"The different items which were gone through on Sunday at the Vélodrome gave food for wonder to the numerous spectators, who, thanks to prompt advertising, were able to answer to the appeal of the Valenciennes Vélo Club.

"The Lille record of a kilometer at a run was beaten with an ease and action which we do not know in France. This record, remarkable in every way, will be sufficient to establish the reputation of our amateur.

“The racing stride is also very clever, regular, and calculated, so that M. Howell was able to leave well in the rear the two champions of Valenciennes and Anzin, who did not expect to meet such a redoubtable adversary. With regard to the bicycle, it only required thirteen seconds to beat the Lille record, and that is not at all bad when the track of the Valenciennes Club is compared to that of Lille, which is considered to be the best in the world.

“The race of horse *v.* bicycle had no decided result, since both arrived at the winning-post at the same time. In short, the performance of yesterday was a complete success for the hero of the day, and the public did not spare him an enthusiastic applause.

“After the well-merited praise to M. Howell we must not forget the committee of the Valenciennes Vélo Club, which did not hesitate to organize the successful meeting in order to procure for their fellow-members an agreeable afternoon’s enjoyment. It is no easy thing to organize in three days a *fête* so complete and so successful. It is known that the committee had also to arrange the details of the road-race in the morning. Nothing was wanting at the Vélodrome. There

was even an orchestra, which was got together on Sunday morning, and which did very well. Without hurting the modesty of the organizers, whose work each of us knows, I feel obliged to say that they, too, have established a record for speed and decision which it would be difficult to beat under the same conditions.

“*Un Coureur du Vélo Club, Valenciennes.*”

I shall soon begin to get quite conceited, and put a high price on my services. This morning the Director of the Lille Baths came all the way from that town to arrange the details of my show at his place. He was a most charming man, and we quickly agreed. I told him that I would do everything he required of me in the way of swimming, but that I was afraid that as a lecturer I should be a decided failure. He assured me that my accent and bad French would be amusing, and that it would be *chic* to give what he calls a *causerie* on the art of swimming after doing a kilometer. I consented, therefore, although my heart sinks at the thought of that awful *causerie*.

I dined to-night like a king. My newly-made English friends invited me to join them at dinner at the chief hotel here—an invitation which I accepted with pleasure and enjoyed immensely.

I think it was the cheapest meal I ever ate. Of course I do not know what my kind hostess paid for it, but I paid my regulation fifty centimes. It would not be fair to quote the *menu* and point out what a capital dinner you can have in France for fifty centimes.

After dinner we went to the *ducassee* at Anzin. *Ducassee* means a long-drawn-out merry-making. The good people of Anzin—about two miles from Valenciennes—give themselves up at this time of the year to a week's revelry. On the Place was set up all kinds of shows, booths, ginger-bread stalls, and merry-go-rounds. Altogether it was a lively scene. Here we parted company, my hostess and her daughters continuing their way home by carriage, while I returned to the hotel to ruminate.

The fact is that my Position—with a capital P—is beginning to cause me some anxiety. It is all very well and rather pleasant wandering about France establishing records and beating local champions, but I am still far from winning my bet. D——'s five hundred pounds are by no means in my grasp yet, and it is beginning to look as though I shall lose my own. I shall make fifty francs over the Vélodrome races, and this will just cover my hotel expenses here. I have about four

francs in hand, and I suppose I shall get sufficient to-morrow to carry me back to Lille. There I shall have to live and earn sufficient not only to pay my board and lodging, but also to carry me to London. My good friend P——x of St. Omer writes to say that I must stop there on my way to England, and if I am still in want of money, he will organize something for me. Just at present I feel rather anxious about the issue, and can only console myself with the very cold comfort that morally I have already won my bet.

In hand this morning, 5 francs 10 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	50 stamps.
	50 dinner.
	40 coffee.

I	40

Leaving in hand 3 francs 70 cents.

I found that my hotel bill just tallied with the sum due to me from the Vélodrome, **Thirty-fourth** Day: so I settled it and had thirty centimes **Valenciennes.** over—but a meagre amount where-with to form the nucleus of my savings for my journey-money and those terrible two pounds.

I rode off this morning to St. Amand, where I

went on horseback, had a quiet ride through the woods with one of my countrywomen with whom I dined yesterday. The weather was beautiful, the company charming, and the consequence was, that I forgot all about my troubles and anxieties, and simply enjoyed myself as I had not done since I came on this mad enterprise of mine. I returned to lunch with the family, and I found the time had passed so quickly that when I looked at my watch there remained but an hour for me to get into Valenciennes, where the members of the *Sport Nautique* would be waiting for my performance. I put spurs to my horse—I forget, it was a bicycle—and rode like mad, arriving just in the nick of time.

There were about twenty members assembled at the landing-stage of the boat-house to see me go through my performance. I showed them the different strokes, racing, side, breast and back strokes, and mounting on to the roof of an out-house I dived off, to the consternation of the spectators, who showed their delight at my coming up safe and sound by hearty applause. After this I performed “my wonderful and entertaining trick”—as the placards of conjurors say—of divesting myself of my clothing in the water. To give the

on-lookers their money's worth I did a long swim, my intention being to go round the island, about a



THE WEATHER WAS BEAUTIFUL, THE COMPANY CHARMING.

mile. The water, however, was so cold, and I started feeling far from warm, after my repeated

divings in and out of the water, that after doing about three hundred yards I gave up, fearing the cramp.

In the evening I dined with my good friends the L——n's. I have hardly been here a week, and already this hospitable family has received me as though I was one of its members. Madame L——n, one of the kindest-hearted women I have ever met, gave me a pretty little Valenciennes pocket-handkerchief as souvenir of my visit here. It does not need anything to remember the happy time I have spent with her and her family, and when I said good-bye to-night, it seemed as though I was taking farewell of friends I had known since childhood.

I attended at the *Sport Nautique* Club to receive my money. It amounted to thirty-eight francs—ever so much more than I expected. They insisted, however, that it was but a fair price for my performance, and so I gave in and took it. After this we all had a very long chat, which lasted until one o'clock in the morning. I was sorry to have to say good-bye to them, for they have been really kind to me. It must not be forgotten that I am not at all elegantly clothed, and everybody who receives me does so simply on the strength of my

word that I am what I give myself out to be, and therefore I feel doubly grateful to those who have given me a helping hand. Valenciennes will ever remain in my memory as one of the most charming towns, and its cheerful, good-hearted citizens as the most hospitable of men that I have met throughout a life of continual travel, and I feel it quite difficult to make up my mind to leave it and plunge once again into the hurry and scurry of busy Lille.

M. F——q, another friend to whom I had a letter of introduction, gave me a book with an inscription, "*Souvenir de son passage à Valenciennes*," added to the words, "à Monsieur William Howell."

			FRANCS.	CENTS.
In hand this morning	...	...	3	70
Over from hotel bill	..	...	0	30
Received for swimming performance	38			0
			42	0

	FRANCS.	CENTS.
Spent	0	20 newspapers.
	0	50 lunch.
	0	50 supper.
	0	50 tip.
	1	70

Leaving in hand 40 francs 30 cents.

CHAPTER V

Arrival at Lille—Evidences of Fame—An old Acquaintance—Croix—The Lille Baths—Pleasant Ride in the Country—Laughing Landlady—Octroi Officers—Practice at the Swimming Bath—The Brâderie—Causerie—Fellow Performers—English Circus Artistes—Four Kilometer Record—Offer of a Place in a Circus—Buffalo Bill—Sylvain Dornon—A Challenge—Newspaper Notices—Wet Weather—With the Circus Artistes—Circus Stories—The Fair Hungarian—The Waiter's Bet—The Fair—Jim Barton—The Man-fish—An English Showman—Lies about England—A talk with the Stilt-Walker—Coffee with two Fair Frenchwomen—Soirée Nautique—Kilometer Swimming Record—Cramp—The Causerie—Enthusiastic Reception—France and England.

THERE remained yet another friend to whom I **Thirty-fifth** had to say good-bye. M. B——k, **Day: Lille.** the chemist of the town, had allowed me to bother him daily with my ideas on everything in general and my own reminiscences. He has given me a vast amount of information about Valenciennes, and has contributed not a little to my enjoyment and pleasure here. We were both, I think, sorry to say good-bye.

I travelled second-class to Lille, and had to stop

at Douai or go on first and pay the difference. Instead I lunched at the restaurant—much more extravagantly than I intended. I was sorry I did not have time to visit the English College here, which I am told is in a very flourishing state. This is one of the few towns on the continent where the English games of cricket and football are regularly played—owing, of course, to the example of the English College.

I got into the railway-carriage with two English Catholic priests, and we fell a-talking. They were going home, and were full of their account of their travels. I am always experiencing how small the world is really, and had another example of it to-day. One of my fellow-travellers, I found, was a friend of a relation of mine. This same gentleman gave me several Egyptian cigarettes—which were a rare treat after the vile tobacco I have been obliged to use.

Arrived at Lille, I was soon struck with the evidence of my fame. Huge placards were stuck up all over the town on which my name figured, sandwiched between Buffalo Bill and Sylvain Dornon, "the celebrated stilt-walker from Landes, holder of the Paris-Moscow record on stilts, who has ascended the Eiffel tower on stilts." In

another place I have the type of honour in the *affiche*, "WILLIAM HOWELL, the gentleman runner, will try to lower his record for four thousand metres—one kilometer at a walk, etc.—established at the Vélodrome of Lille last month in twenty minutes twenty-five seconds."

There are also other placards announcing a "*Soirée Nautique* at the Lille swimming-baths, where the celebrated and versatile English sportsman WILLIAM HOWELL will try to beat the kilometer swimming record, and afterwards give a *causerie* on the art of swimming."

So there I am fixed to beat two records—which I am pretty certain I sha'n't do, for, to tell the truth, I am getting what athletes call "stale," and ought to take a good week's rest if I wanted to do anything.

I walked round the town to see my friends, and everywhere was received with great friendliness. Afterwards I went down to the stables to see my horse Baccarat, who knew me at once. I had him saddled and rode him down to the Vélodrome and saw my English friend, who booked me for supper to-morrow. Baccarat was rather fresh, and bucked nearly all the way down. However, I was able to give him a good gallop, and that quieted him down a little.

I felt so very lonely this evening after the gay hospitality of Valenciennes that I went to a *café chantant* for the first time since I left England. I am not very well acquainted with the ways of these kinds of places, nor did I see anything which the strictest person might object to. My evening's enjoyment would not be worthy of record were it not for the fact that one of the male artistes came up to me after his performance and said, "How are you, Monsieur?"

"Very well. And you?" I replied.

"Don't you remember me?" he said.

"No," said I, scrutinizing his face, "I cannot say I do. Yet there is a something in your face that I remember."

"Don't you recollect being at Dijon about five years ago and——"

"And standing you a glass of beer?" I exclaimed, now thoroughly remembering the incident. "Of course I do, it was at the fair."

Five years ago I happened to be at Dijon at the time of the great fair, and I was so interested in the performance of one of the *artistes* at one of the booth theatres that I asked him to drink a glass of beer with me afterwards. He was an amusing fellow, but a regular vagabond. There

was hardly a town in Europe where he had not been, and his experiences were extremely interesting. This is not the first time to-day that I have verified the truth of the saying that the world is very small.

In hand this morning, 40 francs 30 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	9	0	hotel bill and tips.
	4	45	trains.
	2	30	dinner.
		50	luggage.
	2	0	supper.
		40	coffee.
		50	stamps.
	<hr/>		
	19	15	

Leaving in hand 21 francs 15 cents.

This morning I went down to the baths and was **Thirty-sixth** conducted over them by the most **Day: Lille.** courteous and polite of managers. I have seldom seen such a sumptuous arrangement. There were hot and cold baths, vapour baths, Turkish baths, perfume baths, in fact baths of every possible kind, and all kept as clean and as neat as a new pin. In the other wing of the building was the public swimming-bath, a large basin

of pure limpid water, arranged with all the requisite dressing-rooms and hot and cold douches. The manager introduced me to some of the local swimmers. Altogether I was delighted with my visit to the establishment, and above all by the sincere friendliness of the manager, who treats me as though I was doing him a favour in consenting to try and break the record at his baths, while, as a matter of fact, it is just the contrary.

I was introduced to another English resident, who took me down to Croix, an industrial village a few miles out of Lille. What is remarkable about the village is that it is the place where Sir Isaac Holden has erected his works and planted a regular British colony. Nothing is wanting—church, parson, cricket-field, tennis-courts, football club are all there and flourishing. The works themselves are magnificently built, and possess the highest chimney in France. The proprietor does things on a huge scale. Not content with providing opportunities of sport to his English employés, he has laid out a very pretty public garden, where the tired workers can walk in the summer evenings and listen to an excellent band—also provided gratis. The organization and working of the whole concern seemed to me excellent. I met

one or two Englishmen there who promised to come up and see me try to break the swimming record.

There are to be two days' *fite* at the Vélodrome —on Sunday and Monday. The first day I am to try and break my four-kilometer record, and on the second am to walk a kilometer against the champion of the Pedestrian Club of Lille.

I had to give back to-day five francs of my "hard-earned savings." I played a game of billiards with a man here some three weeks ago. He was very anxious to help me, and in spite of the fact that he had got a hundred and ten points to my twenty-nine, he insisted on calling it a lesson and himself a pupil, and paying me the *tarif* price. On referring it to the stakeholder, however, I was told that I must return it, which I accordingly did to-day.

I spent a most enjoyable evening with my compatriot, and again enjoyed my pipe of English tobacco.

I did not train to-day, for the reason that I am afraid of getting stale, and as my style of living is simple and plain, I think it sufficient to take a moderate amount of exercise.

In hand this morning, 21 francs 15 cents,

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	I	60 luncheon.
		50 supper.
		80 train.
	5	0 returned by order of stakeholder.
	<hr/>	
	7	90

Leaving in hand 13 francs 25 cents.

I have arranged to swim my kilometer this
Thirty- afternoon at the Baths at the rather
seventh Day: uncomfortable hour of two. As I
Lille. cannot lunch just before swimming,
 I determined to mount Baccarat and take a late
 breakfast in the country somewhere. The morning
 was lovely, and Baccarat and I enjoyed the smell
 of the fields and the freshly-watered soil. It is
 remarkable what sympathy springs up between
 an animal and a human being. I am perfectly
 certain that my horse was quite acquainted with
 the fact that I felt happy in the country, and
 seemed determined to sympathize with me by
 friskily jumping about like a young lamb.

I arrived at the village of Verlinghem, and rode
 about the pretty woods in the neighbourhood. I
 then came back to the village, and at the inn
 ordered a sumptuous breakfast, for I was as hungry

as ever any hunter was. Alas! the young widow landlady had no eggs, and could only supply me with "coffee and chartreuse," a combination which she evidently thought must be the right thing for "the gentry." I was not to be done out of my eggs, so I sallied forth into the village and bought some at the little *épicerie*. Returning laden with my spoil I joined my hostess in the kitchen, and while she prepared my *café au lait*, I cooked the eggs. There is something very catching in the gaiety and light-heartedness of the French. My landlady, seeing me take off my coat, put the frying-pan on the fire, and melt some butter therein preparatory to the cooking of scrambled eggs, held her hands to her sides and simply roared with laughter. Of course I joined in, and there we were, both of us, laughing heartily at every new development of my culinary attempt. The result was eminently satisfactory, as she convinced herself by tasting my dish, and I sat down—still in my shirt-sleeves—to enjoy my meal.

The ice was now broken between us, and the laughter-loving widow chattered away to her heart's content. She told me that she had only lately lost her husband, and that already she had several suitors.

"I don't wonder at it," I said, looking at her good-tempered face and buxom figure.

"Get along with you. You are like the rest of the men," she exclaimed with another hearty laugh.

We then talked of different subjects. Verlinghem being near the Belgian frontier, there is a fair amount of smuggling. The customs officers are by no means gentle in their ways. The widow told me that one night returning in her cart from a picnic she was suddenly called upon to halt. She pulled up as quickly as she could, and in front of her horse was an officer with bayonet fixed prepared to plunge it into the animal, if there had been the slightest inclination on the part of the driver not to stop. A case occurred the other day of very much the same nature, and was reported in the newspapers. A horse and covered cart were left standing somewhere in the suburbs of the town, when the animal became frightened and dashed along the road with the reins hanging about its feet. Towards the end of the road was an *octroi* station (where all products brought into the town from the country have to pay a duty), and the officer in charge seeing a cart coming along at full speed seemed to think it must be somebody trying

to force the *octroi*. Running out into the road with his sword he called out "Halte!" without of course any result, and as the horse galloped past him he plunged a foot and a-half of steel into the poor beast's chest. I suppose such incidents must occur where every official is armed, but it seems to me that life is much less considered in France than in England.

I said good-bye to my gay laughter-loving hostess and rode back in the glorious sun to Lille, and arrived at the Baths in time to do my kilometer. The temperature of the water was rather high, at least to my idea, and for the first time in my life I perspired in cold water. I covered the distance in twenty-seven minutes—the record to be beaten is twenty-two and some odd seconds—but I felt altogether out of practice. The turns are not made, as is usual in English baths, by swimming right up to each end and then kicking off from the walls, but two buoys are placed, round which I had to turn forty times for the kilometer. It would require weeks and weeks of practice to enable one to turn them quickly. I found too that I was beginning to feel "crampy" before I finished the distance—a result which, in spite of my training, was quite to be expected, as

the change of exercise naturally would make itself felt even more than if I were, comparatively speaking, not in training.

The manager of the baths is decidedly the most polite of men. There is absolutely nothing I could wish for which he is not willing to do. The attendants at the Turkish Baths have orders to shampoo me, and to give me vapour, hot or cold baths, as I wish. I had half a Turkish bath after my swim, and was thoroughly well massaged. In the cold douche-room after the bath, I felt so very lively that I "shaped" up to the attendant and invited him to have a little box. He was not loath, and we set to. In trying to get back from one of his heavy blows I ran my ankle against a bolt on one of the pipes, and gave myself rather a nasty wound. However, I immediately applied all kinds of remedies, and hope it will heal up at once.

I went down to the Vélodrome after this and did a little training to get rid of some of the stiffness I feel after swimming. I ran the kilometer in three minutes twenty seconds.

I dined with another Englishman to-night, who gave me an explanation of the *fête* which is to be held in Lille to-morrow and Monday. It is called the *fête de la Brâderie*.

The word *brâderie* is derived from the old verb *brâder*, which means "to use up." In the old days it was the custom of the good citizens of Lille to give their cast-off clothing, useless furniture, and other articles used in a household, to their servants, to be sold by them for their own benefit. Gradually the servants appointed a day when these things could be sold. The governing authorities gave them permission to erect booths and stalls wherever they liked from twelve o'clock midnight of one day till twelve o'clock noon of the next. When the institution was first established it was the *rendezvous* of the country people, who secured decent articles at a low price. Now, however, it is considerably altered. The old freedom to erect booths and stalls between twelve o'clock midnight and twelve o'clock noon still exists, but they are not held by servants selling their masters' old belongings. Now traders come from far and near, and sell every sort of goods. The race for a good position for a stall is very exciting. As early as two or three o'clock in the afternoon places are marked off with chalk on the pavement, and some one remains by to see that nobody takes possession. Once midnight has struck up go the booths, and the bargaining and chaffering go on till twelve

o'clock the next day, when the police clear off all traces of this curious fair, and the streets resume their old aspect.

In hand this morning, 13 francs 25 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	80 breakfast.
	40 eggs.
I	20 lunch.
	50 supper.
	35 stamps.
I	0 tip.
<hr/>	
4	25

Leaving in hand 9 francs.

My mind was dwelling with dread all day **Thirty-eighth** yesterday on the *causerie*, which I **Day: Lille.** am announced to give at the Baths, and the consequence was that I dreamed last night that I was about to give my little lecture, and that in my nervousness I could not remember a word of French, and broke out into a harangue in my native tongue which astonished the audience. I still feel that I would prefer going through my six weeks over again to giving that confounded lecture in French.

I rode Baccarat down to the Vélodrome to see

what arrangements were being made for this afternoon. Things are evidently going to be on quite a big scale. All round the track, between the cinder-path and the asphalt, was erected a rail. In the middle of the ground was a platform and a straw hut—the latter of which is to be burned by the Indians of Buffalo Bill's show. Obstacles, too, are placed round at different points on the cinder-path for the steeplechase. Altogether there will be quite a monster show. On the programme, amongst the items of Sylvain Dornon the stilt-walker and Buffalo Bill, my name is printed in the largest letters, from which I conclude that my fame is great in the town.

As I left to go home and have lunch, Buffalo Bill's troupe came pouring in, horses, men, and lady riders, in a motley mass. They form the staff of a big circus at Roubaix, and I could hear the familiar Cockney accent, which told me that there were a good many of my compatriots amongst them.

I took a modest luncheon, and was soon down again at the Vélodrome, mounted on Baccarat. On making my way to the pavilion I found that the big douche-room was reserved for the ladies as a dressing-room, while I shared my usual little

cabin with three of the "leading gentlemen" of the circus. It was immensely amusing. I was treated on all hands as a *confrère*, and in less than no time was hail-fellow-well-met with everybody. The ladies took a great interest in my performance, and pronounced it to be novel. Nothing could induce them to believe that I was an amateur forced by the extraordinary nature of a bet thus to earn a temporary livelihood.

"*Allez*," exclaimed the fair equestrienne, "*vous êtes du même métier que nous*," but how you can wander about the country alone passes my comprehension."

The English members of the company then came up and spoke to me. They gave me an interesting account of their lives. Wandering from North to South, from East to West, they had become cosmopolitan. The itinerary of one of them was as follows—Bordeaux, Lyons, Geneva, Berne, Bâle, Cologne, Lintz, Vienna, Pesth, Semlin, Agram, Trieste, Venice, Milan, and back again to France. They did not make the mistake of their *confrères* as to my being an amateur; I suppose my accent convinced them that I was not a public performer. They all addressed me as "Sir," and went off and explained to their com-

panions that I was an amateur. The effect of this announcement was soon perceived, chiefly in the languishing glances cast on me by the ladies of the company.

The time came for my item, and I went out to the starting-point in my running costume. The public showed that I was still a favourite, for I was greeted with much applause. At the signal I was off in good style, eliciting frequent clapping of hands and waving of handkerchiefs. I felt very fairly fit as I broke into my run, and kept up a good pace. When I got on the bicycle I was so excellently paced that I felt I was doing good time. As I passed the timekeeper's box, somebody shouted out to me to keep on, for I was breaking my own record. I accordingly put my back into my work, and sent the machine along easily. I was able to pull up and get on Baccarat very quickly, and had him into a fast gallop in a few yards. He was in fine form, and carried me along very fast. I was within a hundred yards of the winning-post with twenty seconds in hand, when the wayward little brute broke into the middle of the ground without giving the slightest warning. Of course the record was spoilt, and my disappointment was anger-provoking. I expressed

myself rather forcibly, but even in my state of irritation I could hardly help laughing on hearing a voice shout out, "Ach, it isn't blessin' the baste ye are just now!" An Irishman was evidently among the spectators; that accent could have been cut with a knife.

In spite of my failure to beat my record, the spectators were very kind and cheered me heartily, seeing no doubt that it was owing to no fault of my own that I failed. Later on I mounted another horse and did the kilometer in one min. $37\frac{1}{5}$ sec.

The following are my times—

	MIN.	SEC.		SEC.
1 kilometer at a walk	5	$13\frac{2}{5}$	losing on former record	$27\frac{2}{5}$
1 kilometer at a run	3	$32\frac{2}{5}$	gaining	$12\frac{2}{5}$
1 kilometer on bicycle	2	5	gaining	4
1 kilometer on horseback	1	$37\frac{1}{5}$	gaining	8
	<hr/> 12	<hr/> 28	losing altogether	<hr/> 2 $\frac{1}{5}$

I failed, therefore, to beat my former record by $2\frac{1}{5}$ sec. I should certainly have beaten it had Baccarat kept on instead of turning off in that stupid manner. I cannot comprehend how it was I took so long over my walk, unless it was that I was not paced. A pace-maker is an absolute necessity in work of this kind.

I returned to my dressing-room, and was over-

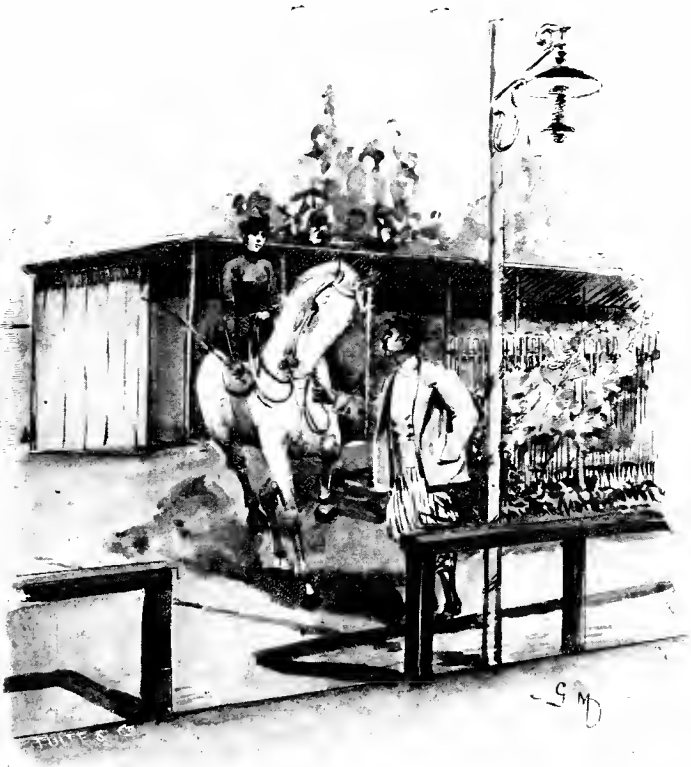
whelmed with expressions of sympathy on the part of my fellow-performers. They all assured me that my "turn" was an excellent one, which would be sure to take, and the unbelieving ones persisted in asking me where I should next perform. Before my departure from the ground I was offered a place in the circus with a promise of a rising salary. Now I feel that my future is assured, and come what may in this world of ups and downs I can always earn my living as an *artiste de cirque*.

The ladies were determined that I should not leave the Vélodrome heart-whole. They kept up a running fire of admiratory ejaculations, which might have turned a heart of stone. To show them that I was not altogether insensible, I led out the horse which one of them was to ride, and helped her on to the saddle, receiving in return a look of gratitude which was sufficient to have repaid a much greater service.

I made one of the Englishmen's heart glad by the present of a little English tobacco. He almost cried with delight. "I haven't smoked English 'baccy, sir," he said, "for two years. I must go back to England soon, for I can't do without it."

The great show of the day was a burlesque on

Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Unfortunately,



I LED OUT THE HORSE.

however, the spectators took it *au sérieux*. There was a lot of firing of guns, capturing of Indians,

and the whole business of attack and defence, ending by the burning up of the straw hut, which made a glorious blaze. Among the characters depicted was my old friend the French caricaturist's Englishman, wearing favourites of immense length, a pith helmet, and a suit of dittoes with checks about a foot square. I have never yet met a man in such a get-up. The only man who in any way approached this style was a Frenchman from the Midi. Sylvain Dornon the stiltman came on the scene next with five or six of his staff all mounted on high stilts. They organized a race round the track, and showed that they can go at a very good rate of speed. They are wonderfully clever, and seldom fall. They carry a long stick which they use when they wish to stand, making it do the duty of a third leg. Their clothing consisted of a black sheepskin cloak, ordinary vest and trousers, and a sort of Tam o' Shanter hat. They wear no boots while on stilts, but cover their feet with several thicknesses of socks.

I dined at the hotel, and then went to the fair which is being held some way out of the town. I am told that it is the biggest fair in the west of France. There are the usual booths that one sees in all fairs, shows of every description, small

theatres, and *cafés chantants*. There are several panoramas, and each of them announced that they had views of Cesario and the assassination of President Carnot. I have never before been so struck with the morbid tastes of the French. It is simply horrible the way in which all the details of every execution are discussed. Perhaps public executions have a great deal to do with this, but there must be something very callous about people who can cry out "Bravo!" when the knife falls on a criminal's neck. This happened quite recently at the Abbé Bruneau's execution.

As I was leaving the fair towards ten o'clock, a pale, sickly-looking young fellow, about nineteen years of age, came up to me, and, politely raising his hat, hoped I would not be offended at being thus accosted, but said that ever since he had seen me perform at the Vélodrome he had been anxious to make my acquaintance. He then inquired when I intended leaving Lille, and whether I was going to give any other performances in addition to those already announced. I told him that it was my intention to leave the town the day after my swimming performance, and that as to doing anything else, it was quite out of the question, since I would be too busy practising.

"That is a great pity," said he, "for I am like you, an all-round athlete. I can ride on horseback, on a bicycle, run, walk, and swim, and I wished very much to race you in your four-kilometer performance."

I looked at the youth, who gave me the impression of being far from strong, and more fit for tonics than for heavy racing. I asked him if he had done anything in the racing line, either on foot, or on horseback, or bicycling.

"Yes, I have raced against time," he replied. "I walked a kilometer in seven minutes, I have run the same distance in four and a-quarter, and have done a kilometer on a bicycle in two and a-half minutes."

"But," said I, "if these are your best times, I am afraid you would not have much chance in a race with me," and I gave him my times for to-day. He was quite unconcerned, the conceited young fool, and made the quiet remark that doubtless he would run better in a regular race.

"And what about your riding?" I asked. "Where have you learned to ride?"

"Oh, I had a three months' *abonnement* at the riding school, and am quite an accomplished rider."

“Then you are the first man I ever met or heard of who has become an accomplished rider after three months in a riding-school,” said I, as I raised my hat politely and left him. If I could not beat that young man at every branch of sport, I should call myself a failure, and take to cab-driving.

I was accosted several times before I got home by admirers of my performance, whose admiration invariably took the form of inviting me to have a *petit verre*. If the French people suffer abnormally from indigestion, as I am told they do, the most natural explanation is these horrible *petits verres*. A Frenchman as a rule is the most sober of men, but he simply ruins his stomach by imbibing so frequently all sorts and kinds of drinks. I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that the ordinary business-man in France takes about ten of these *petits verres* every day. How he can stand that and the French tobacco has ever been to me a wonder and a marvel.

I received to-night a most tender and flattering *billet-doux*, enclosing a charming photograph. But my time is too short now even for the adventures of an *amourette*.

In hand this morning, 9 francs.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	60 cigarettes.
1	0 carriage of bag to Vélodrome.
	40 beer.
1	25 dinner
3	25

Leaving in hand 5 francs 75 cents.

I read the following in to-day's *Dépêche*—

Thirty-ninth Day: Lille. “*Sport Pédestre*.—Several members of the Lille Pedestrian Club are going to try to-day, after William Howell's race, to beat the quarter of a mile and kilometer record, the former of which is fifty-seven seconds, and the second two minutes fifty-three seconds. Established by Claude Bonchoux of Paris.”

The *Echo du Nord* has the following with regard to my performance of yesterday—

“Our friend Howell, the English sportsman, was able to give an interesting performance—a thing by no means easy by the side of the attractions of cow-boys and stilt-walkers. This devil of a fellow, a lover of sport such as is not easily found, amused himself by beating himself and lowering his own record, at least partially. Were it not for his capricious steed, he would have done so entirely. In spite of the vagaries of his blood

horse, the following is the fine result he obtained—One kilometer, etc., etc. And then to find that Howell, with his usual modesty, thought he might have done better !—G. DREFUS.”

I was invited this morning to accompany a family party to the swimming-baths, where the smaller basin was reserved for the purpose. We swam about and disported ourselves in the water like ducks. I suppose that Mrs. Grundy would have held up her hands in terror at the thought of men and women bathing together in a small swimming-bath, but to me it seemed the most natural thing in the world that a man should wish to enjoy a swim in company with his family. At any rate, it was a most pleasantly spent morning, and at least I am convinced that this is the only way to teach ladies the noble art of swimming.

We walked back to lunch through the pouring rain. It looked as though it meant to keep on for the whole day and spoil the afternoon's performance. I have only one item to go through this afternoon, and that is a walking race of a kilometer against the champions of the local Pedestrian Club. I feel confident that I shall bring it off, though I anticipate much more difficulty than I experienced at Valenciennes.

I took the tramway down to the Vélodrome after my meal, still in the pouring rain: The direction of the Vélodrome Company had announced that the show would go in spite of any kind of weather. The aspect of the ground was most forlorn. Huge pools of water stood on the track, everything and everybody had a most bedraggled look. The members of the circus company had all congregated in the *café* which stands on the ground.

On entering I was received with every mark of friendship on the part of my "fellow-artistes." They were gay, hard-working vagabonds, utterly unrestful, and quite incapable of settling down in any one spot. They were full of curious stories of their adventures and the different incidents of their wandering life. One of them told me an interesting tale.

"I belonged to a circus that was then engaged in the North German and Russian circuit," he began. "An accident happened during our stay in the town of Bromberg, and one of our first riders had to go into hospital. We found it difficult to get on without him, for we were already short-handed, and our manager tried to replace him by advertising and writing to his friends in

Berlin. One night, after the performance was over, a young fellow, very handsome and very well - dressed, presented himself and told the manager that he thought he might be able to fill the situation vacant by the loss of the rider. On being questioned, he said that he had never before done any circus-riding, but that he had been accustomed to horses since childhood, and felt sure of being able to do the duties of an ordinary rider. Our manager did not much like the idea of having to go through the trouble and bother of teaching a man the art of circus-riding, but owing to his being very anxious to get away into Russia, and to the fact that the new-comer was far from exorbitant as to the amount of salary which he asked for, he determined to accept him. Before, however, entering into a final agreement, his papers were demanded and shown. They were in good order, and proved the new recruit to our circus to be a native of Stettin, and his name to be Paul something—I have quite forgotten his other name. In a few weeks Paul learnt his business thoroughly well, and showed that he was used to horses. He became, too, a general favourite with all of us, and was always kind and good-natured, if somewhat sad. At the Russian frontier, our papers

were all examined, and being found correct, we were allowed to enter. We travelled about Poland for some time, and were rather surprised to find that Paul spoke Russian well—an accomplishment to which he had not laid claim while he was being engaged by our manager. We gradually worked out of Poland into Russia proper, and at last settled down for a good spell at the town of Minsk. Here Paul left us several times for the whole day, only coming back in time for the performance, and generally looking as black as thunder. Several of us joked him about his melancholy, but he only smiled and led us to believe that he was engaged in an intrigue with a woman. One night, however, things were cleared up. During the performance on that particular night, it was Paul's turn to gallop round the circus, at full speed, picking up different objects as he went. He had just done a round, when suddenly two policemen jumped over the barrier on to the tan and tried to stop the horse. Paul was too quick, for he passed them, and slipping off, rushed to the exit with the evident intention of getting away. It was of no use, however. Another policeman was stationed there and headed him back. This seemed to have a singular effect on him, for he no longer

made any further attempt to escape, but walking to the middle of the arena, he allowed himself to be taken by the two policemen who first attempted to catch him. They were just going to hurry him out of the place, when he suddenly stopped and shouted out at the top of his voice, 'Good people, I am a Russian like yourselves. I came to this town—my native place—to find whether it is true what I had heard about my sister, that she had been sent to Siberia. It is, alas! true; and now, I suppose, I must follow her. But, good people, it is monstrous that for a childish freak——' There his captors, who had all the time tried to stop him from continuing his speech, at last succeeded in placing a hand over his mouth, and in this way he was taken off. We and the public were dumfounded. The latter made not the slightest sign of approval or disapproval of these arbitrary proceedings, but one of our English riders was going to set upon Paul's captors had he not been held back by the rest of us, who knew what an affair with the Russian police meant. We never heard any more of Paul. Our manager got a terrible wiggling from the police for having brought him into Russia as a German, but they were at last satisfied that his papers were so cleverly forged

that it was almost impossible not to be completely deceived by them."

Another man told me of the extraordinary letters and *billets-doux* that are constantly addressed to riders. While he was on the South of France circuit, their chief rider was a black-moustached, good-looking Italian. His room was simply full of letters from admiring ladies. He ended by marrying a rich countess, and invariably invites his old colleagues to a good dinner whenever they pass through his neighbourhood. The same man told me that another Italian rider was nearly killed the week of Carnot's assassination. Whenever he came on the arena the spectators hissed and yelled at him because he was an Italian, and one of the more emphatic onlookers threw an empty bottle at his head, which laid him up for two weeks.

There is a pleasing *bonne camaraderie* among these wanderers that one cannot help admiring. They are, too, so simple in their ways, and in spite of their wanderings are very modest. I inquired what nation produced the best circus-riders, and they were all unanimous in awarding the palm to Englishmen. Of course the clowns are almost always English, and as a rule very popular. I remember being convulsed with laughter

at the cool cheek of two of these gentry. It was at Kiev, and I suppose they thought themselves safe from the presence of their compatriots, for during their tumble they kept up a conversation in English. This is a specimen of the dialogue—

No. 1.—“ I say, Bill ”—a tumble—“ where are you going to have supper ”—another tumble—“ to-night ? ”—a somersault.

No. 2.—“ Blessed if I know ”—a tumble, double somersault, and a general apparent smash up—“ I didn't see nothin' in them ”—a tumble—“ blooming sausages at Popoff's last night ”—a rush round the ring and a fall over the barrier—“ to kick and scream about. Blowed if I don't go back to Gowski's——”

No. 1.—“ No, the beer is doocid bad there ”—a fall—“ let's get back quick to-night ”—another fall this time over No. 2—“ and 'ave a bit o' veal at the hotel.” Here he tumbled and rolled close to where I was sitting, and looking up he saw by my convulsive laughter that I understood him. “ I'm 'anged if there ain't an Englishman here. We'd better stop this 'ere talking ”—which they did. The best of it was that they kept up this little conversation in a tone suitable to the circumstances. For instance, when No. 1 fell over No. 2, he

pronounced the words “’ave a bit o’ veal at the hotel” in such a way that anybody who did not know English would think that he was rating him soundly for his clumsiness in getting in his way.

During the time that I was sitting talking to the members of the troupe, I noticed a young lady member of the same troupe sitting alone and looking very sad. I inquired whether she was ill, and found that she was a Hungarian, and knowing no other language but her own, was always more or less out in the cold. I have a slight knowledge of Hungarian—a knowledge which is purely Ollendorffian, and I went up to the solitary young Magyar and enlivened somewhat her depression by making the utmost of my knowledge of her language. I said, “Which is the best hotel in the town?”

She looked astonished, and said something which I could not catch. I then broke out into another question—Ollendorf is nothing if not interrogatory—“Where is the station?”

At this she looked rather angry, as if she thought I was making fun of her, but I courageously went on with, “Can you tell me where is the post-office?” This time she understood, and we both joined in a hearty laugh. I had quite a flirtation with her afterwards, during which I fired off such sentences

as these, "Have you English mustard?" "Bring me hot water." "Give me some Siebenburgischer wine." "I will take coffee in the morning"—soft nothings which perhaps depended rather on the tone in which they were uttered than on the literal meaning they conveyed. To parody the words of the song, "It wasn't so much what I said, as the feeling way I said it."

The rain still came down in torrents, and all hopes of going on with the *fête* had to be abandoned. I was truly sorry for this, not only because I should have liked to walk my kilometer race against the champions of the *Club Pédestre*, but also because the Vélodrome Company sustained a great loss.

Having said good-bye to my friends of the ring and the charming Hungarian damsel, I accompanied a compatriot home, where I spent another pleasant evening.

On my arrival at the hotel, I was asked to solve a knotty problem. It seems that my particular waiter is so great a believer in my prowess that he made a bet that I should beat the champion in my walking race. As the race did not come off, my backer, of course, declared the bet was "off," but this the other man denied was the proper way of

looking at the thing. They had, each, bound themselves to abide by my decision, which was that the bet ought to be considered null and void.

In hand this morning, 5 francs 75 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	75	petit verre for fair Hungarian.
	30	stamps.
	40	tram.
	50	supper.
	<hr/>	
I	95	

Leaving in hand 3 francs 80 cents.

Only four days now before the end of my little **Fortieth** trip. I wrote off yesterday ordering **Day: Lille.** my dinner in London, for I must confess to feeling the desire for a right-down good dinner. That I will have whether I win or lose.

The weather was showery and disagreeable all day long, but I managed to get through a good deal of leave-taking. It is wonderful how many acquaintances I have made in Lille since I arrived. It is only when I make a list of those to whom I must make a visit before leaving that I have an idea of their number. Some, I hope, will allow me to call them friends, and not acquaintances, for they have shown to me so many marks of real

genuine kindness that it gives me real pain to say farewell, though I am firmly determined that it is only to be *au revoir*.

The fair has an interest for me to such an extent that I nearly always find myself walking there whenever I have a few spare moments. There is something very attractive in my eyes in the collection of vagabonds that go to make up the *personnel* of a grand fair. The ever-present fat lady, the dear old monster of the wild woods, the man-fish, are all such right-down humbugs that somehow one does not feel at all inclined to accuse showmen of deceit, for it is, if we may say so, of such an open nature. Everybody knows that the wild man of the woods is drinking quietly his *bock* behind the booth till the word is given for his entry on the stage. The fat woman is so very placid and good-natured that insensibly one slips into her jelly-like palm a few cigarettes and the price of a glass of beer—presents which she acknowledges with a grin that sets her cheeks shaking for five minutes. The man-fish was a jolly old dog, and we took to each other like brothers. He had the face of Father Neptune, it is true, but the legs of any ordinary person, in spite of the scales that bound them together into the shape of

the tail of a mammoth fish. He had been once the hairy man, but owing to his losing flesh visibly and daily on account of the heat of his clothes, he threw up the *rôle*, and took to display himself in a basin of water as the man-fish. Funnily enough, he had travelled through a great part of England



WE TOOK TO EACH OTHER LIKE BROTHERS.

with a showman whose name was Jim Barton, and who seems to be known all over Europe as a most versatile and clever man of business. The amount of times that this same Jim Barton had been stone-broke and had come up smiling the next day is truly astonishing. As the merman said, "Jeem is in Spain. He speaks Spanish like a Spaniard. His show is wrecked by an angry mob.

He turns up a fortnight afterwards at Bayonne with a splendid troupe of toreadors and bulls and a regular ring, and makes lots of money." "Where did you get these, Jeem?" I ask him. "Oh!" says he, "I went to the municipality where my show was wrecked, got compensation, and turned my wild men and giants and dwarfs into toreadors." "But they are not accustomed to bulls," I cry. "That does not matter," says Jeem. "I do not have a bull-fight; I put a cockade upon the horns of a bull—they are all very quiet—and I offer twenty, thirty, forty francs to the man who will tear it off in the arena. They all pay an entrance fee of five francs, and the spectators all pay, and so I make a small fortune."

Another story of Jim Barton was that all his belongings, tents, and wagons were blown into hopeless confusion one night in a town in the south of France. Next morning there were placards all over the town, "Come and see the Result of last night's Storm! Tents blown down! Wagons overturned! A Seal and a Camel Killed! Their Bodies on view! Entrance one franc." In a week Jim was up again and flourishing. I don't know whether he is only the type of an enterprising showman, or whether he really exists, but my

merman spoke of him as a private would speak of Wellington—the example of courage, energy, perseverance, and pluck.

Funnily enough, in my walk through the fair I came across several Englishmen running shows. One I spotted at once. He had a panorama, and his description of its wonders was given with an English accent and a disregard for French grammar that was charming. He began—"Magnifique! Magnifique! Quel est magnifique? Cette magnifique panorama. Il est meilleur dans tout le monde. Il a des tableaux de toutes les contrées, Japan où se battent à présent les Chines. Peru où habitent toute espèce des animals sauvages. La mort de Monsieur le President de la Republique Français"—this with evident signs of being pleased with the mouthful—"par le couteau du vilain Cesario. Le portrait du mauvais" (wicked?) "Abbé Bruneau. Toutes les os dans le corps sont exhibités. Il y a aussi une skeletonne d'un Rouge Indien. Vous voyez où il a été scalpé. Magnifique! Magnifique! Magnifique!"

I patronized my countryman in the hope that he would explain in his wonderful French the different "tableaux" inside, but as we entered, he said to each of us, "Vous payez votre monnaie

et vous prendrez votre choix. Allez regardez par vous-même où vous voulez." After I had looked round "par moi-même" I came out, and as I passed my fellow-countryman, interrupted his discourse to the crowd outside by asking him in English how long he had been at his present job.

"Thank heaven," he cried, "you're an Englishman. I've been breaking my jaw for the last six weeks over this cursed French language, and I'm dying to speak a word of my mother-tongue. Stop inside a bit, and I'll come and have a chat."

I had to excuse myself and go, but promised to look him up when I shall have more time. As I passed through the fair on my way back to my hotel I was stopped by two ladies, young and good-looking, who, after stammering and stuttering for some time, at last gave me to understand that they wished to help me by engaging me to give them bicycle lessons. I agreed, but upon the condition that they would allow me to give my services gratis. To this they at first demurred; but when I told them that I should not lose or win my bet by the sum of five francs, and that I could never show my face if I made a charge for having the privilege of teaching two

such charming pupils, they consented, but made me promise to take coffee with them to-morrow afternoon before the lesson.

I went down to the Baths to make my final arrangements for to-morrow. I am simply haunted by the thoughts of that awful *causerie* in French. I can only hope that in reality it will not be such a terrible business as my fears have led me to expect. I was introduced at the Baths to the members of the local swimming club, who are called the Tritons of Lille. They seem to have a very good organization, and they swim in excellent style. One of them accompanied me on my way home, and I began to understand the reason why Frenchmen and Englishmen agree like fire and water. Here was an educated young fellow, by no means a fool, who had been engaged for nearly six months in business in London, and yet he actually was absurd enough to tell his friends with whom he was walking that he had frequently witnessed in London the spectacle of a bull-dog and a man fighting against each other. The man, it seemed, had his hands bound behind him, and fought the dog with his teeth only! This was a sight, he assured us, which could be seen every night in London. That old story of British workmen

selling their wives for pots of beer was another of his "travellers' tales," and of course he had personally "assisted" at several of these transactions. His remarks on the freedom of the English young women tended to show that it degenerated into the most absolute licence.

I gave the young man a piece of my mind which I hope he will remember. With all my feelings of admiration for many points in the French character, this kind of thing is sufficient to make me imagine that Frenchmen, very often, take a positive delight in giving an absolutely false portrait of us. They may be somewhat correct in saying that we are rather hypocritical, but to describe us as dog-fighters, wife-sellers, and a nation of lady-cocottes, is going too far, in all conscience.

In hand this morning, 3 francs 80 cents.

FRANCS. CENTS.

Spent	1	75 lunch.
		45 stamps.
		20 fair.
		30 beer.
		<hr/>
	2	70

Leaving in hand 1 franc 10 cents.

I went to the Baths this morning and took a **Forty-first** thorough course of massage, which I **Day: Lille.** think has done me good. As a matter of fact I am beginning to feel rather "stale," for since my arrival in France I have been keeping myself in the very pink of condition, and so I have recourse to the doubtful fillip of a massage.

I had a long talk with the King of Stilt-walkers—Sylvain Dornon. He is a slenderly built man of about thirty-five, and is by trade a baker at Arcachon. He created no small attention some years ago by walking on stilts from Paris to Moscow. He told me that the weather had been very unfavourable to him during the whole time of his trip. He expressed himself very well pleased with the kindness of the inhabitants wherever he passed. I think, however, he was prouder of having ascended the Eiffel tower on his stilts—a feat which seems to have brought him into greater prominence than even his famous journey to Moscow. He earns his living chiefly by his bakery, but adds to it considerably by accepting engagements to appear at public *fêtes* all over France and Belgium. On these occasions he takes with him half-a-dozen stilt-walkers who are, he told me, employed at the bakery. He leaves to-morrow

for Ostend, where he has secured an engagement. He was very anxious to come over to England, and, looking upon me as in the profession of public performers, asked me to try and get him an engagement. I succeeded in explaining to him my position, and we parted with mutual good wishes.

I gave another hour to the preparation of my *causerie*. It is easy enough to write out a very fair speech in French, but the thought of delivering it causes me to shudder.

After lunch I kept my appointment with the two ladies of yesterday. They had a very pretty set of rooms, and were altogether most hospitably inclined. We had coffee and a chat. Of course I had to recount all my adventures from the time I left London until to-day, and my recital was interrupted very frequently by exclamations of "*Quel courage !*" "*Quelle énergie !*" etc. They were extremely interested in my wanderings until I got to St. Omer, and were constantly expressing their wonder at what they were pleased to call my pluck. What struck them most of all was that I was in a strange country, and, as they put it, "far from my home and friends." Indeed, so pleasant is the task of recounting one's adventures to charming ladies, I had to use a good deal of

determination to take my leave. It was arranged that while I went for a bicycle they should take the tramway out of the town where there was a good gravel road but little frequented.

I have more than once had experience of the unselfish kindness of French sportsmen, but I think that Monsieur V——e of Lille deserves something more than a mere casual expression of thanks. He is a dealer in cycles of all kinds, and during the time I have been at Lille one of his machines was always at my disposal either for the purpose of taking a *promenade de plaisir*, or of giving lessons. Considering that the latter is not altogether the safest way of using a bicycle, I need scarcely dilate upon his sportsmanlike hospitality in lending one to me whenever I needed it. Without his kind help I should have had many a fatiguing walk, and have missed more than one opportunity of earning an honest penny by giving lessons.

My charming pupils were awaiting with no small eagerness the promised lesson, and I was no less desirous of initiating them into the mysteries of bicycle-riding. They both got on very well indeed, and by the end of an hour each of them had successfully trundled the machine without help for some little distance. On leaving



WE HAD COFFEE AND A CHAT.

they overwhelmed me with thanks, and promised to turn up in the evening at the *Soirée Nautique*.

I took advantage of the short time which remained by going to see my compatriot, and drinking a cup of English tea. As I leave to-morrow for St. Omer it was a farewell meeting, and we parted with promises of a meeting in England.

I wended my way along the streets to the Baths, feeling that if some one were to break one of my limbs, and so prevent all possibility of my giving my lecture, I should be eternally obliged to him. My programme for to-night is, first, the attempt to beat the kilometer record, then I am to give that never-failing item in my *répertoire*—undressing in the water, and, finally, that much-to-be-dreaded *causerie*. I have prepared the notes which on paper look excellently well, but speeches always do in that form. It is when one comes to the delivering of it that one so often finds out that *orator nascitur non fit*.

The ever-courteous manager and his kind-hearted, encouraging lady received me when I arrived at the scene of my exploits. The Tritons of Lille were all there dressed in their pretty swimming costume. During the intervals of my

performances there are to be races, duck-hunts, and all forms of water contests to be gone through by the young Tritons. I hastened to get into my bathing costume, and, covered with a kind of dressing-gown, I took my place at the deep end of the basin. I was not at all prepared for the pretty way in which the building was decorated. At the shallow end of the bath a cascade of limpid water, lighted up with variegated lamps, fell into the basin with a pleasant murmur. Higher up on the gallery was an excellent band of music, which cheered up the hearts of the swimmers with its enlivening strains. All round on the walls flags and banners floated out or were draped with pleasing effect. The Union Jack was several times displayed—I suppose in my honour. The room was well-filled with spectators, and exactly at the advertised time the proceedings commenced with a swimming race between some of the Tritons. Another item followed, and then the manager told me that my turn had come. Divesting myself, amidst the cheers of the spectators, of my dressing-gown, I advanced on to the spring-board, and at the word of the timekeeper dived into the water and struck out with a long steady stroke. There is nothing so dreary in all this world as walking,

running, or swimming against time in a confined place. A man who walks thirty miles round a two-hundred-yard track, to my mind must fatigue himself mentally as much as though he had read through Herbert Spencer's driest dissertation. There is absolutely nothing to do but think. Going round and round the same track, seeing the same posts, the same rails, the same gates, and the same stones, is enough to send a healthy brain into madness. So I, turning round those infernal buoys felt, in spite of the music, that I would give anything to see somebody fall into the water, or a fight among the spectators, or indeed anything except that stony stare of the onlookers, who reminded me of a set of *savants* looking on at a doctored frog in a glass aquarium. At last something did happen. I got the cramp in my right leg, and therefore had to swim on my right side. Then I heard several cries of "Go it, my boy," and knew that there was a band of compatriots at the deep end prepared to cheer me on whenever they saw signs of failing. And this they did right nobly, for my cramp became much worse, and for a moment I thought I should be obliged to give up the attempt. However, I stuck to my work, although every now and again the muscles in my

leg would tie themselves up into a knot, and cause me the most excruciating agony. Then the devoted band of Englishmen would cheer and shout, and clap their hands, and the rest of the spectators would be roused into enthusiasm, and the building would resound with expressions of satisfaction and delight. At last I got to my fifteenth round, then the sixteenth, and gradually I crept up to the twentieth—which was the finish of the kilometer. Led by my fellow-countrymen the rest of the people gave forth shouts of “Bravo, l’Anglais!” “Bravo, Howell!” and accompanied them with much applause. Although my muscles again tried to tie themselves together into a sailor’s-knot just as I emerged from the water, I managed to get away to the private room without howling with pain as I felt very much inclined to do. Of course I did not beat the kilometer record. I never expected to do that, but I felt quite proud at not having given in to the pain of my “crampy” leg.

The Turkish Bath attendant took me in charge ; and rubbed me down with some strong smelling stuff, and gave me a regular course of massage. I felt much better, and proceeded to dress myself completely in a suit of clothes of which I was to

divest myself in the water. I was ready just in time, and entered amidst another burst of cheering. Accompanied by a young Triton to take charge of my garments as I got them off, I plunged into the middle of the bath and began what was described on the programme as my *divertissement*. I never thought I should get through with it. The cramp in my right leg was worse than ever, and every time I used it the muscles knotted themselves. While I was getting rid of my trousers, my limb was contracted in a most extraordinary way, and it was only by a series of most wonderful wriggles that I at last freed it from its covering. When I emerged from the water with nothing on but my bathing costume, there was a round of vociferous cheers which told me that my performance had been thoroughly appreciated.

As gracefully as my twisting muscles would allow me, I retired to change into my every-day clothes, and to tremble with nervousness at the thought of my *causerie*. The band of Englishmen came in to see me and congratulate me on the night's work. I told them how nervous I was, and somebody suggested Dutch courage as likely to keep off my feeling of, almost, terror. I fell in with the idea, and ordered one of the strongest

glasses of rum I have ever taken. For about the space of one minute I felt elated, but afterwards fell into a state of hopeless nervousness, and when the time came for the lecture and I entered the Baths, accompanied by the faithful band who promised to stand by me, I felt more shy and trembling than ever did a young girl on being asked in marriage.

I walked slowly up to my rostrum, which was arranged in the middle of the bath, and gathering up my courage began : "Mesdames et Messieurs," and then, wonderful to relate, all my feelings of nervousness vanished as a dream, and I felt bold enough almost to attempt a pun in French.

"Mesdames et Messieurs," I began, "I will tell you plainly that I would prefer trying to swim across the Channel to making a speech in French. I only do so because I count upon your indulgence for my defective French and my halting speech." (Cheers.) "I have been asked to give you a short account of the art of swimming. I will not go back to earliest times to find mention made of swimming. You all know how healthful and necessary an exercise it is. Perhaps you do not know that the only animals which cannot swim naturally are man and the pig." (Laughter.)

Here I gave a description of the different strokes, each of them being illustrated by a young Triton swimming in the water.

“And now, Mesdames et Messieurs, I am about to speak to you about myself. You know that I am here in consequence of a bet that I would come to France and live for six weeks simply by means of my sporting capacities. You will be glad to know that I have nearly finished my term, and that I think I shall win my bet.” (Cheers.) “Although it has been a difficult and an anxious enterprise, yet I do not regret it, not only because I gain the amount of my bet, but because I have seen what kindly, good-hearted people you French are.” (Uproarious cheers.) “You talk in French of ‘Scotch hospitality’ as being the highest sort of profuse kindness, but let me tell you that in future it will be exemplified in my mind by *l’hospitalité française*.” (Wild and enthusiastic applause.) “I take this public opportunity of thanking all those who have helped me during my six weeks’ trip, and of telling you that I shall return to England with the most pleasant and agreeable souvenir of France that ever Englishman carried back to the land of fogs.” (Loud and continued cheering, waving of handkerchiefs, and

other signs of delight at my words, during which the manager presented me with a most magnificent bouquet.)

In addition to the applauding Englishmen who formed part of my audience, there was a very fair number of cyclists who came to help me on in case I got stuck. One of them said to me after I had done my kilometer, "To tell you the truth, I came to see whether you could really swim a kilometer. I have seen you run, walk, bicycle, ride a horse, play tennis, and now I am satisfied that you can swim. All I can say is that, with your abilities in the way of sport, you ought to be able not only to earn your living but make a nice little sum of money by giving athletic performances."

As the house emptied, my friends, French and English, insisted on drinking my health up-stairs at the bar. We sat and chatted and grew merry until late. Then the men from Croix had to hurry off to catch their train, and I took my departure too.

I did not, however, leave the Baths before expressing again my acknowledgments to the manager, and madame, his wife. They have acted towards me in the most generous, kind-hearted

way possible. There are so many ways of doing a kindness or showing a politeness that only a kindly or a really polite man knows of, and Monsieur and Madame V——k, as well as the gallant young Tritons of Lille, will always remain in my recollection as having that estimable quality which doubles the value of a kindness by the manner in which it is done.

And now I am absolutely at the end of my stay at Lille—to-morrow I go to St. Omer, and the day after I hope to be in London. Had I spent my six weeks in an ordinary tour in France I should, doubtless, have spared myself a good deal of trouble, some uncomfortable little incidents, and a few pangs of hunger, but I should never, perhaps, have made a single acquaintance, and certainly not a friend. Now I can claim to have made a good many of the former and some of the latter. But I have done more. I have seen the Frenchman *de près*, and have had excellent opportunities of studying him. Somebody once said that an Englishman delighted to make himself out better than he was, while a Frenchman's desire is to persuade others that he is worse than he really is. There is a vast amount of truth in this observation, and it is an explanation of the

antipathy the one has for the other until they really become acquainted with each other. Then the Englishman says—"’Pon my word, this French chap is not a bad sort. He makes himself out to be a regular devil of a fellow, but he has a kind heart and a cheerful countenance. He seems to sympathize with the sorrowful and with the oppressed, and he would share his last franc with a beggar. I never understood the man before, and really I quite like him now I know him."

And the Frenchman says—"I have been taught by the newspapers to look upon Englishmen as hypocritical, canting humbugs, but this man is different. He doesn't hold up his hands in horror at everything I say, nor has he yet asked after the state of my soul. He can smile and laugh at my jokes. Nay, he even jokes himself, and has a certain quaint wit of his own which is decidedly amusing. I have always been led to think that Englishmen were close-fisted and selfish. But this man is neither the one nor the other. I begin to believe that the newspapers are wrong after all, and that the English are not at all a nation of disagreeable, dull hypocrites."

But this state of mutual appreciation requires a basis of close acquaintance. Unfortunately not

every Englishman has the time or inclination to devote a month or so every year to a near study of the French character, and so things remain as they are—that is to say, that between the two nations there exists a feeling of dislike. I don't think I can be accused of exaggeration in saying that at the present moment the French, as a nation, hate us more than they did after the battle of Waterloo. Newspapers are responsible for this to a great extent, but newspapers cannot create an almost national sentiment; they may fan the spark and nurse it to a blaze, but unless the fire exists in the hearts of the people, it would be impossible to raise it to such a magnitude. It is a good thing to see ourselves sometimes as others see us. This is our portrait in the average Frenchman's eyes—"We are in all things cunning beyond all comparison, selfish to the uttermost degree, and only look upon the disasters of our neighbours as affording us opportunities of aggrandizement. Under the cloak of religion and a desire to advance the civilization of the world, we seek our own advantage, utterly regardless of the wishes or wants of others. Far-reaching, ever-watchful, one of our chief aims is to lower French prestige. We take up a plan and work at its preliminaries

for years, nay, almost for centuries, until it is ripe for action, and then we swoop down like an eagle on its prey. There is no obstacle too great for us, no difficulty too appalling. Our diplomacy is more deceitful, more crafty than that even of the Russians in the Balkans. If we meet with a check, we accept the blow with outward calm, and even turn, metaphorically, the other cheek to the striker, but all the time we are laying a deep plan to have a full revenge later on. Our morals are lax in every way. England is a pit of corruption and licence, all nicely covered over with the cloak of religion."

With such an idea of us, it is hardly to be wondered at that now and again an outburst, of a dangerous fierceness, takes place in France against England and everything that is English. Things, indeed, are so bad that the feeling of hatred towards the Germans is much less intense than that against us. It seems a pity that such a state of things should exist and owe its existence mainly to a misconception. We send out as our representatives those fine specimens of our country—the tourists. I will say this, that of all the overbearing, ungentlemanly, contemptuous, and ill-educated men that I have ever met

with, the ordinary English tourists travelling on the Continent are the very worst. In England they are, I suppose, quiet, peaceable English gentlemen, but they seem to change their natures abroad. Here is an instance—I was leaving a French town by train, and was accompanied to the station by a native who had entertained me at his house for a fortnight. I got into a carriage where there were two Britons, who, as soon as I entered, looked at each other and sniggered. My friend remained at the carriage-door to say good-bye, and we talked together until the train went. My compatriots kept making remarks to each other all the time, somewhat in this style—

“What a gabble those two Frenchmen are keeping up, to be sure, one would imagine one’s self in a farmyard.”

“Yes, and look at that chap’s moustache, it’s waxed out to a point like a needle.”

“Well, I never can understand what Froggies can have to say to each other. They never run or jump, and ride like sacks.”

“Look at the fellow’s gestures now. Why, I believe that if you tied a Frenchman’s hands behind his back, he would not be able to say a word.”

“Well, we’re off now. Look out for the kissing.”

When we had started I took out a cigarette and asked these two “gentlemen” if they could give me a light. I will say this for them, that they looked thoroughly shamefaced, but I was not content with this, and allowed myself the luxury of a little lecture. The extraordinary part of it was that they took it in the most repentant spirit and apologized a hundred times over, but, as I represented to them, my friend will go home with the idea that the majority of Englishmen are a most unmitigated set of cads.

Again the tone of our own press is sometimes really too arrogantly contemptuous of everything foreign. A Frenchman showed me the other day a cutting from an English newspaper which he kept with him, to preserve, I suppose, his anger against us. It said—“We are always glad to welcome French colonial enterprise, for it saves us worlds of troubles. Unfortunately for our neighbours across the Channel, her population does not increase sufficiently to be able to cover the numerous tracts of land which she annexes from time to time and calls ‘colonies,’ with that most important adjunct to a colony—colonists—and fortunately for us she cannot therefore become

our serious rival. However, she is extremely useful. She drives out savage natives from a certain tract, makes posts and roads, and sets up telegraphs, and—then our British colonists take advantage of all these improvements, and the French bear the cost of administrating the place while we derive the benefit.”

Now, can there be anything more calculated to arouse the angry feelings of Frenchmen than an article like that?

In all my wanderings during this trip, I have only twice experienced acts of discourtesy. In the first case, I presented a letter of introduction to a gentleman who received me with the greatest kindness, and told me he was generally to be found at a certain *café* every day, and hoped that I would join him there and talk over my prospects. I took the first opportunity of doing so, but was received with a glassy stare. In the other case, a man with whom I had spent a whole afternoon thought it best not to recognize me the next time I saw him at the Vélodrome. But considering the extraordinary circumstances under which I have been staying in France for the last six weeks, I think that only two cases of incivility is a very small average. I wonder whether a Frenchman in

England on the same errand would not have had to complain of a greater number of rebuffs.

It must ever be a matter of regret that this misunderstanding exists. It would be a still greater pity if it should give rise to complications. The Press of both nations have a heavy responsibility, and that it will use its great power with moderation and good sense must be the prayer of every patriotic Frenchman and Englishman. For my part, I firmly believe that Sport will play a great *rôle* in the relations between the two countries. It, at least, provides a subject about which there are greater chances of agreement between both nationalities; and upon its base, I see no reason why there should not be built a solid structure of goodwill one towards the other.

For my performance this evening I am to receive fifty francs, and for that of Sunday the sum of eighty francs. After paying my hotel bill here and the expenses of my journey, but little will remain to carry me to London. I do not mean to run the risk of "losing my ship for a pennyworth of tar," so I shall give my lecture at St. Omer, and earn ample to carry me back to London with my two pounds intact.

	FRANCS. CENTS.	
In hand	1	10
Borrowed	10	0
	<hr/>	
	11	10

	FRANCS. CENTS.	
Spent	1	30 stamps.
	2	15 luncheon.
		60 cigarettes.
	5	30 tips.
		70 beer.
	<hr/>	
	10	5

Leaving in hand 1 franc 5 cents.

CHAPTER VI

Farewell to Lille—The Priests in the Army—The Englishman Abroad—French-English—Reception at St. Omer—"You are a Devil of a Man"—A Gay Meal—Old Friends—Conférence—Causerie—Newspaper Notices—Departure from St. Omer—Arrival at Boulogne—A Swim in the Sea—English Trippers—Embarkation on board the *Marguerite*—Fellow Passengers—Arrival at Fenchurch Street—Change of Dress—Bath—Arrival at the Club—Congratulations—A Toast.

SAYING good-bye is never a very cheerful business, even to one who is at the end of an arduous task and is returning to enjoy the fruits of victory. Everybody has claims of gratitude upon me, and it takes a long time satisfying them. The Manager gave me his blessing and a hearty hand-grip when I left the Baths ; my kind friend, M. C——e, of the Vélodrome, with whom I have worked at all times and in all weathers, was no less cordial in his farewell greetings, and I took my ticket for St. Omer with quite a sad heart, and my purse stored, for the

first time since I began my trip, with sundry gold pieces.

Luck even followed me here, for I found that I was to have the company of a clever, interesting young Frenchman, whom I had met once or twice before. He had just completed his year's military service, and was full of the subject. I asked him what kind of treatment the priests—or rather the young men destined for the priesthood—received in the barrack-room. Everybody who travels in France must be aware with what hatred they are so often regarded in every-day life, and I should have thought that they would experience this to a greater degree in the regiment than outside. This, however, it seems is by no means the case. If they live up to their profession and creed they receive the respect of their fellow-soldiers, but if they attempt to throw off, for the moment, their religion, nothing can equal the scorn and contempt which they have to put up with at the hands of the other men. My companion told me a story to illustrate the former case. A young Seminarist occupied a place in the same barrack-room. On his entry he was received with the chaff and teasing that fall to the lot of every new-comer—but nothing more. On the evening of his first night, when the men were about

to turn in, the young fellow took out his missal and began to read it, and then went on his knees by his bedside to say his prayers. This was greeted with shouts and cries, and one of the men threw something at his head. The corporal, however, calmed the uproar, and allowed the recruit to finish his prayers in peace. The next morning, too, he reported the man to his officer for having been guilty of the offence of interfering with the religious belief of another. The culprit was placed under arrest and taken before the colonel, who was well known throughout the *corps d'armée* for his unbelief. On this occasion, however, he surprised everybody by inflicting a penalty of seven days in the cells, and by declaring he would be still more severe if ever another such case was brought before him.

More than once I have been struck with what might be called the stay-at-homeness of the mass of the French people. A Frenchman who has been to London—of course I am talking of the bourgeois class—is regarded as a devil of a fellow for travelling. To settle down in a foreign country is looked upon as adventurous in the extreme. The contrast between England and France in this respect is most remarkable. There is hardly a

man in England who cannot count either among his relations or his friends, several who have taken up their abode abroad, either in the Colonies, or America, or on the Continent. In France it seems quite extraordinary to hear of anybody who seeks his fortune out of his native country.

My fellow-traveller and I talked of most subjects under the sun. Speaking of education in France, he astonished me by declaring that infidelity is more common with those people who have been educated under the Jesuits than with those taught in the Secular Government Schools. His explanation was that the restraint maintained in the religious establishments was so great that when the scholars left they almost invariably rushed to the extreme of unbelief ; while owing to the home influence exercised on boys frequenting the State schools, and because of the more sensible and moderate way in which they are conducted, they do not on leaving experience that almost complete change in their lives which is the case with the *Frères*.

My friend left me at Hazebrouck, and I continued my journey in solitude, except for the company of a young English lad who was travelling home to England. He had been watching me

for the last half-hour, paying particular attention to my clothes and luggage, which, I suppose, stamped me as an Englishman. My conversation with my French friend, however, had quite put him out of all his calculations. When he had gone I took out an old copy of the *Standard*, and immediately my companion was once more convinced that I was a fellow-countryman. He determined, however, to make quite sure, and asked me in a hesitating way if I spoke English.

"Well, I ought to," said I, "since I am an Englishman." We then chatted until I arrived at my destination, but all the time I could see there was lingering in that boy's mind a certain amount of distrust for a man who spoke French fluently.

I don't know whether my experience is unique, or whether it represents the general case, but I have found that Englishmen, as a rule, look upon a fellow-countryman who speaks French well with a most decided feeling of suspicion. In fact, one of them took the trouble to tell me what Bismarck is reported to have said—" *Méfiez-vous d'un anglais qui parle français sans accent* "—" don't put your faith in an Englishman who speaks French without an accent." Talking of the English accent, I am convinced that nine out of every ten Englishmen

who speak French think it a sign of affectation to attempt to pronounce the words properly. On the other hand, Frenchmen simply massacre the words they borrow from us. For instance, who would recognize "passmackaire," "peekpockay," "toob," "creeckay," "spor," "yat," "startaire," "bookmackaire," for "pacemaker," "pickpocket," "tub," "cricket," "sport," "yacht," "starter," "bookmaker"? Then again, words are coined in the most extraordinary way, and with an utter contempt for the grammar of our language. Has any Englishman ever used the word "struggleforlifer"? It exists, however, in French, and is the equivalent for "struggler-for-life." Do the mass of English-speaking people understand what a "clubman" is? It is the French for a member of the *jeunesse dorée* who frequents clubs. This word is, however, an Americanism as well. If you invite a Frenchman to a bachelor dinner, he will probably ask you the question, "Can I come in a 'smoking'?"—which, being interpreted, means, "Can I come in a dinner jacket?" Sometimes, too, you may hear a gay French Lothario say, "*Je m'en vais flirter Madame*"—"I am going to flirt Madame," meaning of course "with Madame." In nine cases out of ten a Frenchman will write "sportman" for "sports-

man." Indeed, the word "sport" has become quite incorporated into the French language. The adjective *sportif* has been formed with a significance of its own, equivalent to our word "sporting." For instance, if I wanted to describe a town as being devoted to sport, I should say in French "*une ville sportive*." So also they talk in France of "*une carrière sportive*," "*la vie sportive*," etc.

I have frequently seen signs lately of the anti-Semitic campaign which is being carried on. In every place where there is any likelihood of its being read, there is stuck up a little handbill with the words, "*Pour l'honneur et le salut de la patrie n'achetez rien au Juif*"—"For the sake of our country's honour and safety buy nothing of a Jew." I suppose such means of arousing the public attention have been found efficacious, or they would not be used. Perhaps we shall yet see the same kind of thing in England. "For the sake of Old England's honour and safety buy nothing 'made in Germany.'"

I had given notice of my arrival at St. Omer, and when I left the train, the boots of the hotel together with the little daughter of the proprietress were at the station to greet me and carry my luggage. The boots was effusive in his welcome,

and insisted upon shaking me cordially by the hand. He told me that he was proud of my



“WELL, MONSIEUR, YOU ARE A DEVIL OF A MAN!”

acquaintance, and inquired anxiously whether I was likely to win my bet. Upon my telling him that in all probability I should do so, he stopped on the road, and putting down the bags he was carrying,

looked me in the face and said, "Well, monsieur, you are a devil of a man!" and insisted on shaking hands once again. The little girl, too, seemed to take a great interest in me, and told me that her mother was waiting to see me and give me a hearty welcome. And it was, indeed, a hearty welcome that I received when I got to the hotel. Madame came out to meet me, and kept shaking both my hands, until I began to wonder whether I had returned from Thibet instead of from Valenciennes. Then her daughters came up and there was quite a little scene, and I felt like a Wellington returning from Waterloo. My hostess' face simply beamed with delight at having me back again, and she made me sit down and drink our mutual healths before she allowed me to give an account of my wanderings. Then with an audience consisting of Madame, her daughters, the boots and chambermaid, I gave the history of my doings. I told them how I had nearly been killed at Lille, and they all pitied me and applauded my resolution. As I recounted the sad solitary life I led in that big town before I got work, they expressed the deepest sympathy for my sufferings. The beating of the champions of Anzin and Valenciennes was applauded with glad shouts of joy, the boots re-

peating *sotto voce*, "Well, he *is* a devil of a fellow." I did not omit to say how often I had thought of the cosy little Hôtel Ville de Lille, and how among the many kindnesses I had received none exceeded that of my present hostess. Altogether I felt as though I was with people whose very existence depended on my success.

Then what a lunch we had ! I would not allow any of them to eat the meal in the other room, but we all took it together. I was questioned on every little incident and adventure. How did I feel at such a moment ? Was I very much hurt when I fell from the horses at Lille ? Didn't I feel frightened in the thunderstorm at Valenciennes ? Was I treated well ?—and so on. Then a bottle of right good Bordeaux was broached, and we washed down an excellent luncheon with it, and we laughed and joked and enjoyed ourselves till well on towards the afternoon, when I had to go and see my other friends, and household duties claimed my hostess.

I was destined to undergo much the same kindly reception at the hands of my friend M. P——x, who had first given me a helping hand when I arrived at St. Omer, at the commencement of my trip, sad and despairing. I had to go through the

business of again recounting my adventures, at the end of which my friend clapped me on the back and assured me that St. Omer was proud of having set me on my way. He informed me that he had arranged for a meeting of the Vélo Club this evening, to hear me lecture, and showed me the following notice in the local paper—

“*Véloce Club of St. Omer.*—M. Howell, who has undertaken a series of sporting performances in the North of France, in consequence of a singular bet of which we made mention a month ago in our columns, has now finished his enterprise, and returns to-morrow to London after a six weeks’ stay in France.

“M. Howell has given very successful performances on horseback, on foot, on bicycle, and in the water, at different towns, notably at Lille and Valenciennes. He is charmed with his stay in France.

“The young sportsman was particularly touched by the kind reception he experienced in our town, and is unwilling to leave the country without paying us a visit. In consequence, he will, this evening at half-past eight o’clock, give a *conférence-causerie* on the subject of his adventures to the citizens of St. Omer, who have so kindly helped

and encouraged him in the successful carrying out of his courageous bet. The members of the Vélo Club are requested to attend as well as the members of the different societies, to whom the subject is likely to be interesting."

We had another joyous meal together—the landlady, her family, and I. We cracked a second bottle of Bordeaux and enjoyed ourselves to the hilt. My progress has been watched by these good people with careful attention. Everything that has appeared in the newspapers has been read with eagerness, and now I am quite a hero. The novelty of the thing is what strikes my landlady the most. Sometimes she throws herself back on the chair and roars with laughter without one word of warning. When I ask her what is the cause of it, she laughs again and shrieks out, "*You* a circus-rider!" or "The idea of *your* giving bicycle lessons to the Valenciennes grisettes!" or "Oh! that widow in the train!" Her gaiety is so infectious that it is never long before I join in, and then we all give way to renewed laughter. I feel that never has a poor wanderer met with a kindlier, gayer, more motherly landlady than I have in the proprietress of the Hôtel Ville de Lille.

This afternoon I saw a regiment of infantry enter

the town after a long route march, during which they had a sham fight. They were in heavy marching order, and some of them looked terribly distressed. One poor little officer I especially noticed. His face was white and drawn from exhaustion, and he looked as though he would faint. He kept pace, however, pluckily with his men, though I could see how glad he was to get to the end of his day's work. The regiment was complete with ambulance and canteen wagons, though the picturesque *vivandière* exists no longer in the French army since its reorganization. This reminds me that I have been told by several soldiers that one of the most popular works of fiction in the barrack-room is Ouida's *Under Two Flags*, translated into French under the title of *Cigarette*.

Accompanied by the trusty M. P——x, I made my way in the evening to the Café de France, where I was to deliver my *conférence-causerie* before the members of the Vélo Club. Before the beginning of the proceedings I was greeted by several members whom I had met during my last visit here, and they were all extremely cordial and full of congratulations on the probably successful termination of my labours and anxieties. The



"You A CIRCUS-RIDER !"

nervousness which I had experienced yesterday before giving my lecture at the Lille Baths had entirely disappeared. I may say, without conceit, that my French is fairly good, but to make a speech in any language but one's mother-tongue is always difficult. To speak publicly has never been one of my accomplishments ; indeed, my first attempt of such a nature took place last night in a foreign language. The stammering and stuttering which I thought so strange in speakers is a weakness I thoroughly comprehend and sympathize with, but luckily I have self-confidence enough, or sufficient conceit, to get out my words without much hesitation.

When at last I got up and began my *causerie*, there were, I suppose, about thirty people present. I gave them a full account of my adventures, and elicited laughter and applause at frequent intervals. My audience was quite proud of the fact that I had started in their town, and appreciated to the full my expressions of gratitude to them for the opportune aid they had given me when I was last here.

I sat down amidst applause, and then we had a kind of general conversation, during which I explained the working of the system of control

under which I was placed with regard to the stakeholder, and other details of my bet. I gave them a full statement of my present financial position, and informed them that with my receipts of to-night I expected to arrive to-morrow in London with my two pounds in hand. Their good wishes for my success took a practical form, and I was presented with an honorarium of thirty-five francs ; more the conditions of my bet do not allow me to receive for a lecture.

There was a billiard-table in the room in which I gave my lecture, and at its close I was invited to show the assembly the principles of the game as it is played in England. I must confess to preferring altogether the continental mode of play to that to which we are accustomed in England. Pockets seem to give greater chances to the hard striker of scoring "flukes," while in the other game calculation of the strokes is a necessity even for a beginner. By chalking off pockets and the baulk-line I was able to give some idea of the English game, and received for my services the sum of five francs.

To-day's papers arrived from Lille, and there are notices of my performance. The *Echo du Nord* has the following :—



I WAS ABLE TO GIVE SOME IDEA OF THE ENGLISH GAME.

“*Le P. P. C. de William Howell.*—William, our friend William, the plucky sportsman whom we have presented to our readers, is leaving us to-morrow, and although he has thought fit to finish up with a swimming performance, it does not mean that his bet has come to nothing (*être à l'eau*). Far from that, William is victorious, and worthily so. Like a simple Phileas Fogg, he returns to London with his two pounds in his pocket, having accomplished his sporting *tour du monde* in forty-two days. Let us hope that he has, like the said Phileas, found the Aöuda of his dreams.

“So, Phileas—pardon, William—was last night at the Lille Baths, where the genial manager, together with some willing Tritons, had organized a *fête* in his honour. They did a little of everything in that pretty little basin, studded with bright points of electric light: acrobatic exercises, quadrilles, even a tournament on horses of zinc all full of air.

“William gave the good example; like the woman of the song, he took advantage of being in the water, to dress, undress, and gossip (*s’habiller, déshabiller, et babiller*). The gossip consisted of a very interesting *causerie* upon the art of swimming, in which the speaker also took a cordial adieu of

all those who had helped him on in his bet. It is a P.P.C., which is quite as good as the ordinary one.
—G. DREYFUS.”

Le Dépeche says—

“*Une fête aux Bains lillois.*—Last night there was a *fête* at the Lille Baths. The room was decorated in exquisite taste and pleasantly illuminated by numerous lamps, blue, green, yellow, violet, etc., affording a most agreeable *coup d'œil* to the spectator.

“M. William Howell, an old acquaintance, tried to beat the kilometer swimming record, without, however, succeeding in his task. This did not prevent him from receiving hearty applause from the spectators, who showed how they admired his insurmountable energy.

“A *causerie* on the art of swimming and the demonstration of the movements necessary in swimming, delivered by M. Howell, also was a great success, and the assembled listeners did not spare their marks of sympathy for the young sportsman whose praise we have often sung in these columns.

“Altogether, it was a most successful evening, and everybody came away with a most delightful souvenir.”

	FRANCS. CENTS.	
In hand this morning	1	5
Received Vélodrome Co.	80	0
„ Baths Manager	50	0
„ Lecture to-night	35	0
„ Billiard lesson	5	0
	171	5

	FRANCS. CENTS.	
Spent	10	0 paid back.
	43	70 hotel bill and tips.
	6	75 railway and tips.
	60	45

Leaving in hand 110 francs 60 cents.

To-day I am to return to London—the forty-
Forty-third third day since I left Victoria Station,
Day: St. Omer but only the forty-second of my stay
and London. in France. I have 110 francs in my
pocket, which at 25 francs the pound amounts to
£4 8s., which, after paying my bill here and my
railway-fare to Boulogne, ought to give me enough
to get to London with my two pounds intact. My
idea is to take the Palace Steamer Company's boat,
the *Marguerite*, which runs from London to
Boulogne and back daily, but, in case there is a
fog or a storm which might prevent its arrival at

Boulogne, I think I shall have sufficient to carry me to London by the ordinary route.

It was a sad meal—my breakfast this morning. My landlady, her family, and I have got on so well with each other that it is quite difficult to part. However, I promised to come back again soon, and our good-byes were spoken. The little group at the door of the hotel, comprising every single person belonging to it, waved handkerchiefs and shouted out good wishes as I started for the station, accompanied by my good friend the boots. He has learnt to look upon me as one of the wonders of the earth. He told me quite artlessly that he will always remember me, and will recollect with pride having shaken hands with nothing more or less than a hero. Had the road to the station been longer, I am afraid my self-conceit would have risen to a terrible height. Economy being still the order of the day, I took a third-class ticket to Boulogne, and having placed my luggage in the compartment, the boots left me. I tried to give him a tip, but he would not hear of it. I saw him enter into conversation with a railway-porter, and hearing the words “devil of a fellow,” knew he was talking about me.

Before the train left, M. P——x, who was the

first to help me on my way, filled the cup of indebtedness by coming to see me off, and wishing



OUR GOOD-BYES WERE SPOKEN.

me God-speed and a happy return home. Had I been recommended to him by his greatest friend, I could not have received more kindnesses. Nothing

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has been too troublesome, and he has followed my progress in other towns with the interest of a brother. And yet there are some people who say that sport does not exist in France.

My journey to Boulogne was only pleasant in the fact that I was getting perceptibly nearer England; in other respects, the hardness of the seats was sufficient to make me quite uncomfortable. But it came to an end at last, and I found myself in the town station of Boulogne. I got hold of an outside porter, and at once made my way to the offices of the *Marguerite*, where I was told that the steamer would arrive about three, and would land me this evening in London at 8.30. There was plenty of time before me, and I determined to have a bathe in the sea—a treat for which I had been pining ever so long. There was a rather stiff breeze blowing, and the breakers stretched a long way out to sea. My fellow-bathers were mostly amusing themselves in a foot of water, ducking whenever the little waves came tumbling in. I was anxious to have a good swim, so struck boldly out, intending to get beyond the foaming breakers into unbroken water. Just as I entered it, a boat, which I had noticed before I entered, approached me, and the

boatman told me that I was not to go out any further. I inquired why, but he would give no other answer than "*C'est défendu.*"

"Oh, bother that!" I said to myself, and struck out again for the open sea.

"I will 'dress' a *procès-verbal* against you if you continue, Monsieur," shouted out the man, and considering that discretion was after all the best thing under the circumstances, I gave up the pleasure of a long swim out to sea and returned to shore.

I watched with interest the bathers male and female, and I came to the conclusion that the costumes of the latter were after all that one reads of them in the French newspapers, extremely disappointing. In some people's opinion perhaps their scantiness would have been an attraction.

My lunch was sumptuous, considering how economical I have been lately, and I went down to the quay to await the *Marguerite's* arrival with a sensation of benevolence towards all men. I never saw such a quantity of flashy second-rate racing men in all my life, and all of them English. Wherever there was a group of my compatriots—and there were many in the neighbourhood of the pier—the subject of their conversation

seemed to be the question of odds and betting. An unfailing sign of the "sporting" nature of the Englishmen in Boulogne is to be found in the fact that the sporting papers are generally the only ones found in those *cafés* which seem to be given up to the use of the exiled Briton.

I was surprised as I sauntered through the town to see at several hoardings the huge placard announcing my last Sunday's performance. I am described as the "celebrated English Gentleman Sportsman." Decidedly my fame has spread, and I shall expect to receive applications from proprietors of shows and circuses asking my terms.

At last, after a weary wait, the commotion on the quays announced that the *Marguerite* was coming up the harbour. Immediately there was a rush from all sides, and at last the huge vessel appeared forging her way to the wharf. On the upper deck, a band of cold-fingered musicians were trying to play the *Marseillaise*, and the passengers, mostly excursionists from London, seemed to put on a look of calm contempt for the inhabitants of the country whose shores most of them were seeing for the first time. On the quay, the spectators were pointing out to each other those passengers who seemed to have suffered from the

effects of the motion, of course deriving an intense pleasure from the disasters of the poor wretches. When the gangway was fixed, out poured a crowd of Londoners, all shouting and screaming as though they had escaped from a lunatic asylum. Several groups amused me very much. There were two young people, the girl very extravagantly dressed, though not in the best of taste, the man looking woefully blue, and having evidently suffered from sea-sickness. He was declaring that he had had "enough of the blooming boat, and wouldn't go back, no, not if he was paid for it."

"But yer must go back some'ow, Jack. What are you goin' to do?" asked his companion.

"What I'm agoing to do?" he shouted, "why wite till the bloomin' tunnel is built, o' course!"

In another case a family party, consisting of father, mother, and two sons, announced their intention of making the most of the quarter of an hour allowed them by the *Marguerite* by visiting "one o' them French caffees." Rushing across the quay, they entered the first they saw. From the deck of the boat I watched them enter, and when they came on board I could hear them still full of their appreciation of a "French caffee." They did not seem to be aware that the house was kept by

an Englishman for Englishmen, and was purposely arranged in every respect on the model of an ordinary English public-house.

Finding that I had quite enough money to carry me safely to London, I made a present of ten francs to the outside porter who had looked so carefully after my luggage and me during the day. He looked very surprised, and salaamed me all the way down the gangway and on to the quay, evidently under the impression that I was a prince travelling *incog*.

There was plenty of variety among the passengers during the trip back to England. I suppose most trades and nearly every profession were represented. A supercilious barrister who could not understand how people who dropped that letter "h" ever could enjoy themselves, was very amusing. For some reason or other he took me for a Frenchman—probably because I sat reading a French novel—and began to point out to me the peculiarities and eccentricities of the *Marguerite's* passengers. His French was terribly bad, but very amusing.

"Vous voyez, Monsicur, ces peuple-là," said he, pointing to a group amidships, "lui est un simple homme de travail, la femme a meilleur costumes

que ma dame. Je vous dirai la raison. L'homme ne paye pas les taxes, il n'a pas une position à——soutenir. Sur le dimanche il porte un habit noir et les autres jours il se promène avec une pipe et des habits vieux et sales. Moi, je ne peux pas fumer une pipe sur les rues, et il faut que j'aie des bons habits et un chapeau——un chapeau——quel est le mot? ce que nous disons 'un chapeau d'en haut.' Ce n'est pas juste cela, mais notre pays va aux chiens."

"Aux chiens, Monsieur, et pourquoi?" I could not resist asking, anxious how on earth he would translate "going to the dogs."

"Nous disons en Angleterre," said he slowly, "quand on est mauvais, et boit, et vole, qu'il est allé aux chiens. C'est à dire qu'il doit vivre avec les chiens et les chiens sont un emblème de vice, chez nous."

I was glad to hear that "dogs were an emblem of vice," but gave my friend the slip and walked up and down the broad deck of the *Marguerite*. The weather was lumpy, but our boat was such an excellent sailer that there was hardly any motion. We stopped at Margate to land and take up a few passengers, and I was glad to hear the English

tongue once again in all its purity, although it came from a boy who shouted to another, "I say, Bill, some of them people looks as green as a sweet pea."



THE BROAD DECK OF THE 'MARGUERITE.

It was dark as we passed Broadstairs, and the lights of the town were wonderfully pretty dancing over the ruffled water. Gradually we came up against a strong tide, and at last the *Marguerite*

arrived at her wharf at Tilbury, having brought us back in very good time. She is a splendid boat, and goes at a terrific speed. I patronized her to-day for economy's sake, but in the future I shall take advantage of her more often.

It was past ten o'clock when the train landed me and my two packages at Fenchurch Street Station.

D—— and the stakeholder together with a few friends had arranged to dine at the club at eight, and I was to have joined them there if I could manage to arrive in time. There was nothing for me to do but to hurry to the rooms where my luggage was awaiting, and get into my clothes as quickly as possible. And this I did with speed, feeling anxious to present myself with all the glory of my successful six weeks' trip. D—— knew already that there was every likelihood of his losing his five hundred pounds, for, of course, the stakeholder had been kept regularly informed of my financial progress, but the details of my enterprise were yet to be related.

I don't think I ever appreciated the absolute bliss of getting into decent clothes so much as I did this evening. I had carried with me only two

changes of costume, and there had consequently been but very little variety. Then my baths had been obtained often under great difficulty, and I was in a position to thoroughly appreciate the pleasure of a real good hot bath with all the accessories.

It was near eleven o'clock at night when all my toilet arrangements had been satisfactorily concluded, and I was seated "clothed and in my right mind," inside a comfortable hansom speeding to the club. Everything looked so different and *so* rosy. Dirty London after all is a glorious place, especially when you return to it under such circumstances as mine.

I gave the cabby all that remained of my money, excepting the two pounds, and, entering the club, was told that my friends were in the smoking-room. As I entered the room, holding in my hand the two bright golden sovereigns—I had furbished them up all the way up the Channel—there was a perfect roar of welcome which must have considerably astonished the other members who were not in the secret. Immediately I was surrounded and found myself shaking hands with my friends, and nobody was more cordial than the



I ENTERED THE ROOM, HOLDING IN MY HAND THE TWO
BRIGHT GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS.

loser of the bet. Innumerable questions were fired at me, but I absolutely refused to answer a single one until I had eaten something. Accordingly I was conducted into the dining-room, where I had something to eat in spite of the lateness of the hour ; and then seated in a comfortable arm-chair in the smoking-room, with a good Egyptian cigarette, I went through the whole history of my adventures. Never before have I spoken for so long a time without a stop. My audience seemed quite entranced, and even the sedate club-waiter hovered near to catch my words. The story of my dangerous ride at Lille excited the interest of them all, and many were the expressions of interest and criticism. The beating of the champions at Valenciennes, too, excited their intense admiration, and D—— exclaimed, "That alone was worth the five hundred."

I took the opportunity of recounting the many acts of kindness I had received, and of observing how in the name of Sport I had been enabled to succeed. I told them that French sportsmen were the most amiable, polite, kind-hearted fellows that one could wish to see ; and at the conclusion of my narrative, made them all fill their glasses and

drink, with me, the toast of “French Sport and French Sportsmen”—and never was a toast received with heartier enthusiasm. And so, with this fitting end, concluded my adventures in the world of Sport.

THE END.

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